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Wednesday, 24 September 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Address by Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ndayizeye (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, on behalf of my delegation and in my personal capacity, to extend my warmest congratulations to Mr. Julian Robert Hunte on his election to preside over our work. My country's delegation and I wish him every success and assure him of our full cooperation in bringing his noble mission to fruition.

I should also like to pay a tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for the skill and competence with which he guided the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the skill and dynamism with which he has led our Organization and on his unflagging attention to the people of Burundi in helping them to emerge from the serious crisis they have experienced for the past 10 years.

I should also like to voice our profound gratitude to the Security Council for its ongoing readiness and manifest determination to assist the Government and people of Burundi in the quest for a lasting solution leading to peace and national reconciliation. The regular visits of the Security Council to my country have encouraged the inter-Burundian peace process and sent a message of hope to a people severely battered by war.

Since the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi on 28 August 2000, the peace process under way in my country has made significant progress. Since 1 November 2001, we have had transitional institutions uniting all the political factions of the country. Since then, effective administrative reforms have been undertaken and reforms planned for the judiciary are gradually being made as funding becomes available.

Furthermore, the people of Burundi and the international community were gratified by the transfer of power at the highest level of State, which proceeded smoothly on 30 April 2003, guaranteeing the

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institutional framework of the Arusha Agreement. The Transitional Government of Burundi is now involved in negotiations with the armed groups in order to achieve a permanent ceasefire agreement and to ensure its effective implementation.

Thus, on 7 October 2002, we signed a ceasefire agreement with the factions of the Forces nationales de libération-Parti Libération du Peuple Hutu (FNL-PALIPEHUTU) and the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Front pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD), led respectively by Alain Mugabarabona and Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye. On 2 December 2002, we signed a similar agreement with the principal armed movement of CNDD-FDD led by Pierre Nkurunziza. Today, the Transitional Government is pursuing negotiations with the latter with a view to integrating that group into the Republic's transitional institutions, including the Defence and Security Corps, the National Assembly, the Senate, the Government and the Administration. The most recent negotiations were those organized in Dar es Salaam on 15 September.

Dar es Salaam served as the context and opportunity for the presentation and consideration of the strong and effective positions of all concerned. Above all, it provided an opportunity to exchange views and to understand and reaffirm the importance of the central focus of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and for taking into consideration the national realities that will ensure the maintenance of stability. We refer in particular to respect for the allocations agreed in Arusha; the granting of visibility to CNDD-FDD in the institutions, while avoiding a raising of the stakes and the exclusion of others; the equitable sharing of power; respect for the rights of citizens; and so on.

A summit of heads of State was then planned on very short notice to arrive at the conclusions and compromises necessary to the signing of the protocol for the implementation of the ceasefire agreement of 2 December 2002 and for the entry of CNDD-FDD into the transitional institutions. We take this opportunity warmly to thank the heads of State of the region and delegations at that summit for their work leading to the steps already undertaken.

These fairly positive results should not blind us to a number of difficulties facing Burundi today. Indeed, the continuation of war is a major obstacle to implementing planned reform, even though the Government is sparing no efforts to meet this great challenge, and its commitment to implement the Arusha Agreement and ceasefire agreement for peace and reconciliation in Burundi speaks for itself.

Therefore, we continue to urge leaders of the regional initiative for Burundi, mediators and the international community to step up their pressure on Pierre Nkurunziza's FDD for a ceasefire and integration in institutions, and on Agathon Rwasa's Parti pour la libération du peuple Hutu (PALIPEHUTU) to rejoin without further delay the transitional Government of Burundi at the negotiating table, the only appropriate forum to voice its claims.

We also urge the international community to make a substantial financial contribution to the African Mission in Burundi, which is crucial to the monitoring of the ceasefire.

Finally, the Government of Burundi is impatiently awaiting the establishment of an international judicial commission of inquiry in Burundi, whose work will clearly contribute to helping Burundi to objectively confront the crucial issue of the campaign against impunity.

Another major challenge confronting us is economic growth and efforts to combat poverty among our people. Indeed, the people of Burundi are now living in unspeakable poverty. Ten years have so severely devastated the national economy that we no longer have the bare minimum required to sustain social harmony. More than 68 per cent of the population of Burundi is living beneath the poverty level.

Of course, we approve of efforts already made by the international community to ensure the survival of my country. But we also ask it to make further efforts to quickly fulfil the promises made in Paris and Geneva.

I am pleased to say that the peace process in my country is now developing in a propitious subregional environment recently characterized by significant progress in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a democratic breakthrough in Rwanda.

That positive change should lead to the definitive end to conflicts and also make possible the international conference on the Great Lakes region,

which the Government of Burundi so ardently hopes will take place.

We wish to see the peace that we seek for Burundi and its neighbours spread to the entire world. During the Millennium Assembly in September 2000, heads of State and Government agreed, inter alia, to spare no effort to save our peoples from the scourge of war, whether it be civil war or war between States. A decision was also made to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and security and to take concerted steps to combat international terrorism.

On the one hand, we can justly welcome the commitment made by the leaders of the entire world to work for a better planet, and we commend the somewhat positive results in restoring international peace and security. On the other hand, our collective conscience places obligations on us all and requires sustained vigilance and efforts in the face of persistent and serious setbacks endured here and there on the path to international peace and security. Indeed, the world of the twenty-first century has not been spared from the dangers of war, poverty, terrorism, disease and natural disasters.

The efforts to combat terrorism that were stepped up by Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) have had mixed results thus far, in view of the frequency and viciousness of terrorist acts throughout the world, from which even our outstanding Organization is not spared. These terrorist attacks have done much to contribute to maintaining a general trend towards over-reliance on the military and the strengthening of doctrines based on preventive attacks, a concept that continues to fuel political and diplomatic debate.

Despite the ever-increasing commitment of the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, hotbeds of tension among or within States have not yet been extinguished and calls for war are enduring and threatening, like the sword of Damocles. Mercenaries are increasingly being used as tools to destabilize sovereign and independent States. The threat of nuclear war continues to loom over us and poison international relations.

Trafficking in human beings, a true form of slavery in the twenty-first century, particularly with respect to the child labour market, child prostitution, the use of children as cannon fodder in conflicts and illegal migration continue to be a reality to this day.

All these abuses have as a common denominator an attack on human rights and international humanitarian law that the Member States of the United Nations are duty-bound to champion side by side within the framework of multilateralism, one of the most cherished principles of our Organization.

In light of the impression that we are experiencing a genuine crisis in the architecture of peace-building and international security, intelligent reform of institutions entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security is urgently needed to better enable them to meet the security needs of our time.

Above all, the revitalization of the General Assembly, the most representative organ of the United Nations, must be tirelessly pursued. Careful consideration should make the General Assembly much more operational and streamlined with respect to its working methods and, in particular, to impartial follow-up and implementation of its resolutions and decisions.

Reform of the Security Council in all its aspects also continues to be a top priority for us, as the Millennium Declaration stressed, to meet the concerns about the regional balance of its membership. The credibility of the Council and our Organization are at stake here.

Moreover, multilateralism must remain a common pillar for us all, as one of the fundamental values that should underpin international relations in the framework of active solidarity and shared responsibilities, under the aegis of our Organization.

We also appeal for regular voluntary financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations and support for mechanisms of regional and subregional conflict-prevention and promotion of political stability, with particular attention given to Africa.

There is no need to recall that our world is increasingly characterized by growing interdependence, conflicts, pandemics and natural disasters that have repercussions that know no borders between States. Economic and social imbalances that result from the unfair and non-inclusive international financial structure prevent us from efficiently tackling today's very complex challenges. The needs and interests of developing countries have not been sufficiently taken into account. The gulf between rich

and poor is widening. We therefore have a common duty to establish an environment that will benefit all poor peoples.

With respect to cooperation for development, the fight against poverty remains a priority. Attaining the goals set at the international level during major conferences and summits involves the elimination of poverty and hunger, in particular in rural areas.

This implies, among other things, significant investment in the agricultural and rural sectors geared towards increasing production and protecting the environment. We are all aware that, in order to be successful, the development efforts of poor countries require multifaceted international support. To that end, the commitments undertaken at the Monterrey conference regarding aid to development are encouraging, but we must promptly move from good intentions to specific deeds.

The least developed countries have weak and marginalized economies within the international financial system. They therefore require particular attention in terms of official development assistance, direct foreign investment, debt relief, the strengthening of capacities and access to international markets. We also urge the international community to advance the integral implementation of the Almaty plan of action as a response to the specific difficulties linked to the distance to the sea and to high costs of transportation that seriously handicap the economic development of landlocked countries.

Africa is the continent where the ills of destitution have attained an alarming level. In a shared impetus, Africans have created the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The warm welcome the international community gave to NEPAD must be backed by concrete gestures of solidarity. Thus, the spirit of partnership, which also entails the active participation of local authorities and associations of civil society, can, in fact, become a reality and allow our continent to benefit from its immense riches down to a grassroots level.

The rules of the World Trade Organization need to be made more flexible to allow developing countries to benefit from the liberalization of world trade. The initiatives already undertaken along these lines in Doha deserve to be further intensified. There is a need to end all forms of subsidies for products exported from rich countries, which lead to distorted exchange rates, as well as various non-tariff obstacles. The international community must also work to remedy the instability of the prices of commodities, which are the major source of revenue for poor countries.

Another major challenge is overcoming the HIV/AIDS pandemic and halting malaria and tuberculosis in tropical countries. AIDS is a threat to mankind. It is devastating entire populations, making millions of children defenceless orphans and swallowing up all development efforts. Faced with this common danger, urgent action is necessary. We herald the establishment in January 2002 of the Global Fund to combat these three scourges, and we urge those countries that have the financial and scientific means to do so to step up their efforts to limit and ultimately stamp out those disasters.

I would not like to end without emphasizing again the critical role that the United Nations Charter bestows on our Organization in its sacred mission of humanizing international relations each day and contributing to building a better world. The obstacles in the path of the United Nations are not inevitable; rather, they are an opportunity to meet new challenges and adapt the Organization to achieve the objectives of the Charter and those of the Millennium Declaration.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Svetozar Marović, President of Serbia and Montenegro

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Svetozar Marović, President of Serbia and Montenegro, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Svetozar Marović, President of Serbia and Montenegro, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Marović: I am honoured to address you for the first time on behalf of the State Union of

Serbia and Montenegro. The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was created in the interest of peace, stability, the democratic right to freedom of choice and moving quickly to a European track. We have assumed the responsibility for a policy of non-compromise in the Balkans. We have assumed the responsibility to demonstrate that in the region that used to be burdened with divisions and conflicts it is possible to work out an agreement that will push us forward together.

We are certain that our lives can be better if all of us in the region commit to that goal, if all of us in the region look to the future and if all of us in the region look to Europe and other people who share the same goals. That is why we are sure that life can be better for all peoples.

With this hope, we agree with all who perceive terrorism as one of the greatest evils facing the world today. We can defeat terrorism only if we all join forces. That is why, for us, there is no alternative to multilateralism, and the United Nations is the guarantor for that, both today and tomorrow.

Terrorism is not a problem only for the rich countries, as the Secretary-General said yesterday. It is a problem for every man and every country, just as it is a problem for parents who lost their children just because they chose to swim in a river and belonged to a different religion and nationality. We deplore the deaths of those children, the same as we deplore the terrorist attack in Baghdad, which caused the death of innocent people, among them Sergio Vieira de Mello. We condemn these deaths as all humane, civilized and progressive people do. But that is not enough. We must strive to ensure that such things happen no more.

The activities of the United Nations in Kosovo demonstrate that with good intentions on all sides there is hope for creating preconditions for dialogue, instead of hatred and conflicts, so that people discuss and resolve their problems instead of creating new ones. We are glad that one of the crucial issues for the stability of this region — that of Kosovo — is on the threshold of dialogue, as we have called for.

We have been encouraged by the announcements of representatives of the United Nations that the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina could start by mid-October and that it has been supported within the contact group. I hope that it will also be supported in Pristina, as it is supported in Belgrade. In this undertaking as well, the role of the United Nations and its representative in Kosovo is extremely important.

For its part, Serbia and Montenegro will do its utmost to ensure the success of the dialogue. This is an opportunity that we must take advantage of, in the interest of the European and democratic future of the region. We have to be patient and persistent.

We are aware that we cannot change the past. But we can do a great deal to improve our present and future. We seek peace for all people left without their homes. There are more than 650,000 of them in Serbia and Montenegro, and we want them to live where they believe they belong. I am sure that within the framework of the tripartite agreement with Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina we shall soon find a common solution that will ultimately resolve that problem.

From our own recent experience we know a lot about victims and suffering. That is why we call for an end to violence in all parts of the world — in Baghdad and Iraq, and the Middle East. We are convinced that the international community and the United Nations, primarily the Security Council, will find a way to stabilization and to a life in peace and freedom for all people. The human race has only one world to live in. We in Serbia and Montenegro stand ready to contribute to peace efforts through peace operations, to protect peace and to defend each nation's right to a democratic future.

Of course, we are primarily committed to the stabilization of the situation in the region of the Western Balkans, cooperation among the countries in the region, the fight against organized crime and full cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. No crime should be left unpunished, and all perpetrators should be brought to justice. Our goal is to join the process of European integration as soon as possible, as well as the Partnership for Peace. The Thessaloniki summit of the European Union and the countries of the Western Balkans defined clear goals. Serbia and Montenegro will not let go of this chance for a European future. We have a responsibility to create a better, more peaceful and dignified life for generations to come.

That is an obligation not only for us in Serbia and That is a motive and force keeping us together in the United Nations to do all we can so that good may prevail over evil, peace over conflicts, democracy over dictatorship and economic prosperity over poverty. We can do it together. This is not a utopia; it is a realistic

possibility which will be successful to the extent we are able to work together. Serbia and Montenegro trusts it can be done.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Serbia and Montenegro for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Svetozar Marović, President of Serbia and Montenegro, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boris Trajkovski, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Boris Trajkovski, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boris Trajkovski, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Trajkovski: I am greatly honoured to address this distinguished gathering of the world's leaders at the United Nations, a truly unique global organization that is deeply engaged in the promotion of human values and international peace and stability.

I would like to thank Mr. Jan Kavan for his important contribution in the past year as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and to congratulate Mr. Julian Robert Hunte on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly at the fifty-eighth session. I wish him every success in executing that function of great responsibility.

On behalf of all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, I would like to pay special tribute to the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who delivered an indeed inspiring speech yesterday, for their relentless dedication and efforts in pursuing the righteous causes of protecting human rights and freedoms and safeguarding prosperity and security in the world.

We certainly remember a great person, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, who paid the highest price for pursuing the noble role of the United Nations in Iraq. We fully support the goals of the international community in Iraq: the achievement of a free and sovereign Iraq governed by the people of Iraq for the people of Iraq. However, that sovereignty must be based on democracy, freedom and peaceful existence with its neighbours. To achieve those goals as quickly as possible, the United Nations must play a more comprehensive and active role in the transition back to Iraqi sovereignty. I would also like to take this occasion to express our satisfaction with the work carried out by the coalition forces in helping the Iraqi people to rebuild their country after the decades of disasters of Saddam Hussein's despotic regime.

Reforming the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, and revitalizing the General Assembly are of crucial importance to us all. My Government firmly believes in the need to pursue those goals in a consistent and more efficient way.

The Republic of Macedonia strongly believes the United Nations involvement in various parts of the world will essentially improve the responses of democratically oriented Governments and reform-minded people and will add to the overall level of legitimacy of their actions. It is obvious that we need to offer more vocal support to multilateralism when dealing with the substantial issues on the international agenda to which we are fully committed: the eradication of poverty, the fight against the scourge of HIV/AIDS around the world, conflict prevention and the protection of the environment, among others.

The World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Geneva this year and in Tunis 2005, along with two other summits held last year on financing for development in Monterrey, Mexico, and sustainable development in Johannesburg, can be regarded, in the context of globalization and the overall development process, as landmarks of a new approach in dealing with the challenges of today's world. Within the aforementioned framework, it is essential fully to implement the Millennium Declaration as a key document for peace, security, sustainable development and prosperity.

The most serious contemporary threat to humanity is identified and visible. It is the evil of terrorism. The fight against terrorism has been and must remain our highest priority. In this regard, it would be immensely helpful to make a commitment to reaching a consensus in relation to the remaining

disputed points in the process of drafting conventions on international and nuclear terrorism.

Facing the challenge of the year 2001, we found a way out by signing the Framework Agreement that brought vital democratic processes back to our institutions and re-established and reaffirmed democratic procedures for addressing internal problems of any kind. Today, I am very proud to say that I come here in the same mood I was in three years ago when I took part in the Millennium Summit — full of optimism and truly convinced that, after the hard work had been done, strategic issues of our future had been solved, once and for all, upon a broad political, social and interethnic consensus. Progress towards a real and authentic integration of all ethnic communities in the State structures is significant and has roots in our centuries-old model and tradition of multiculturalism and inter-ethnic coexistence.

In order to contribute in a constructive way to creating a more positive picture of the region and productive cooperation among nations, the Republic of Macedonia launched numerous regional initiatives in the context of integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. In parallel, while pursuing very ambitious reform agendas, we achieved an internal consensus about our foreign policy priorities and realized that we will most successfully leave behind the poor legacies of our unfortunate past by promoting new substantial links among the people who live in South-East Europe.

A month ago in Ohrid, we held a very successful regional forum on dialogue among civilizations, attended by numerous heads of State, other leaders and scholars from all over the world, who spoke very openly about the importance of having cultural interchange as a permanent basis for the promotion of continuous dialogue and cohabitation among peoples and States. In the message adopted at the forum, all participants agreed that a thorough and continuous commitment would be needed by all to genuinely transform our region and to defuse once and for all this powder keg of Europe.

The Republic of Macedonia has built solid cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and developed a network of activities aimed at easing communications and at liberalizing the movement of people from both sides of the border. The Republic of Macedonia welcomes the appointment of Harri Holkeri as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and gives him its full support. We are fully supportive of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the political position declared by UNMIK calling for the fulfilment of the standards of democracy and the application of the rule of law before the onset of negotiations over the final status of Kosovo. We express our deep concern over the recent upsurge of inter-ethnic violence in Kosovo, which only undermines the efforts of the international community and the Kosovar people to fulfil the set standards.

In the Balkans, we are seeing collaboration and mutual respect emerging even between yesterday's enemies and opposing factions. We are witnessing the gradual but steady reconciliation of the nations. Last but not least, important regional initiatives for free trade, trade facilitation and building infrastructure are connecting businesses and binding people in a productive way, which helps to raise awareness of our common future.

My country, the Republic of Macedonia, is an indivisible part of these joint regional efforts to transform our part of the continent into a decent place to live in. To that end, we will need the understanding and concrete support of the rest of the world community, which should not neglect the call of progressive people to join efforts to secure liberty. We believe that the greatness of countries is dependent not upon the size of their armies and the number of weapons they possess, but upon the commitment and dedication of their citizens to the noble ideas of humanity and the legacy of our civilization. In this tremendous task of preserving our common treasury and of creating a better world for the generations to come, we are more than willing to participate, because we are all equal to each other, while contributing to the common aim.

We are deeply concerned about the escalation of violence in the Middle East. The parties need to recommit themselves to the road map process, because it is the only alternative that can bring security and stability to Israelis and Palestinians alike. The international community must step up its activities at this extremely difficult juncture, ensuring that it remains on the path of ending terrorism and occupation and of establishing the State of Palestine, living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security.

On disarmament matters, bearing in mind our immediate concerns over the problem of small arms and light weapons, the Republic of Macedonia has been an advocate of strong international action towards preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, since these pose a serious threat not only to the security and stability of my country, but also to the broader region. We welcome the conclusion of the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, held in July 2003, that progress had been made worldwide within barely two years of the adoption of the Programme of Action.

For the African countries, the main priority at this moment is the fight against HIV/AIDS, a pandemic that is taking a devastating toll on the African population. The international community must work hand in hand with the African Governments to defeat this deadly disease. Africa must also work very hard to achieve the strategic goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development in the areas of peace and security, democracy, good governance, poverty reduction and sound economic management.

I sincerely believe that we will find a common language with regard to the issue of how to strengthen our Organization and maintain its mission of peace, prosperity, economic and social justice and human rights.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boris Trajkovski, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kuchma (*spoke in Ukrainian; English text provided by the delegation*): I should like at the outset to congratulate Mr. Julian Hunte on his election to the high post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his professionalism and very fruitful work at the helm of the General Assembly during the previous session.

Three years ago here at United Nations Headquarters we solemnly adopted the Millennium Declaration, which embodied our hopes and expectations for a more secure and just world. Shortly thereafter, however, the world had to face new and daunting challenges. Unfortunately, the tragic events of 11 September 2001 were not the last in a sequence of horrible acts of terror.

Just last month, on 19 August, the United Nations suffered irreplaceable losses in Iraq. With a feeling of deep sorrow, I bow my head in memory of the United Nations staff who lost their lives. We lost excellent, talented and dedicated people, among them the Head of the United Nations Mission in Iraq, the outstanding Brazilian diplomat Sergio Vieira de Mello.

It is a sad and disturbing fact that during recent years United Nations staff have been facing growing insecurity. This makes it all the more urgent for all members of the international community to fully comply with the relevant international treaties, first and foremost, the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. As one of the initiators of that Convention, Ukraine decisively calls upon all States that have not yet done so to accede to the treaty.

Our country joined the anti-terrorist coalition at the very outset and has made a significant contribution to its activities. We are determined to remain in the ranks of the coalition until international terrorism as a global threat can be taken off the world's agenda. I believe, however, that not everything has been done to date to prevent terrorist activities.

I have in mind first of all effective measures to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Ukraine unreservedly stands for a comprehensive strengthening of the system of universal

international treaties aimed at preventing the nuclear threat.

An effective response to new challenges requires urgent action to reform the United Nations, first and foremost the Security Council. I am confident that further delay in the long-overdue reforms could result in a serious crisis of confidence for the United Nations. We cannot let that happen. There can be no viable alternative to the United Nations as a unique global Organization. As for the task of reforming the United Nations, we must admit that today there are more questions than there are answers.

In this context, the successful reforms in the area of United Nations activities for peacekeeping and conflict prevention can serve as a good example for all of us. In many situations of armed conflict, the United Nations now acts flexibly, rapidly and effectively. I am pleased to note that over the past several years Ukraine has been playing a leading role among the countries contributing troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations. I believe that conflict prevention should become a key element of the philosophy of the work of the United Nations in the new millennium. Ukraine fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts aimed at strengthening that component of United Nations activities.

In my address at the Millennium Summit, I stressed the need for the international community to elaborate a comprehensive strategy on conflict prevention. In my opinion, peacekeeping operations with a preventive mandate from the Security Council could become one of the key instruments of such a system. We also need to further develop and improve the principles and mechanisms relating to the application of international sanctions aimed at curbing the supply of weapons to conflict zones.

With regard to the situation in Iraq, I would like to express confidence that the tragic losses in Baghdad will not diminish the international community's commitment to providing support to the Iraqi people for the renewal of their country. The sense of common responsibility for the destiny of the long-suffering Iraqi nation and for peace and security in that region was the imperative that guided our decision to dispatch a military contingent to the Persian Gulf.

I hope that the adoption by the Security Council of a resolution on the establishment of an international force for the maintenance of peace and security in Iraq under the auspices of the United Nations will enable as many countries as possible to join those efforts.

After many months of a slide towards the abyss, a truly historic opportunity arose for achieving peace in the Middle East. Last May, the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace was held in Kiev at the initiative of Ukraine. It became, in effect, the first international forum at which the road map put forward by the Quartet gained the support of a large number of States Members of the United Nations. We sincerely hope that the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace dialogue will not be blocked by obstacles created by the current controversies.

Ukraine shares the concern expressed in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration that the international community is not paying sufficient attention to trying to resolve the chronic global development problems such as poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, environment pollution and other issues. Despite repeated declarations — primarily by the developed countries — of their readiness to increase the volume of financial and other assistance to tackle issues of sustainable development, the actual efforts that have been undertaken have not been sufficient for the timely attainment of the goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration.

In this context, I would like to recall that Ukraine made a tangible contribution towards a peaceful and safe world in the twenty-first century by renouncing its nuclear arsenal — one of the most powerful on Earth — and by decommissioning the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. In assuming the burden of the large-scale effort to transform the area of the catastrophe into an ecologically safe zone and to resolve unprecedented economic, social and humanitarian problems, we relied upon the understanding and support of the entire international community.

Today, welcoming the work of this Organization and its Member States with regard to the implementation of the United Nations strategy on Chernobyl, I express the hope that more decisive steps will be taken in support of our efforts. I am confident that the adoption of a resolution on this question at the current session of the General Assembly will provide additional impetus for our cooperation on the Chernobyl issue.

Finally, I would like to draw the attention of the participants of this meeting to one other matter. Seventy years ago the totalitarian Soviet regime engineered an artificial famine in Ukraine, which claimed the lives of between 7 million and 10 million of our compatriots.

Unfortunately, the world did not respond to our tragedy back in 1933. The international community believed the cynical propaganda of the Soviet Union, which was selling bread abroad while, in Ukraine, hunger was killing 17 people every minute. From this rostrum, I should like to call upon all Members to support Ukraine's initiative that the United Nations pay tribute to the memory of those who perished. We do not want to settle scores from the past; we simply want as many people as possible to learn about our tragedy. That knowledge will help us to avoid similar catastrophes in the future.

As the Secretary-General recently stated — and quite rightly — thanks to the past century's achievements, the world became "a world of increasing openness and freedom; of growing mutual confidence; above all, a world of hope." Today, we are demonstrating the ability to take concerted and responsible action in the face of conflicts, challenges and global threats. In that, the principal guarantee I see is that we will be able to achieve the noble goals solemnly proclaimed three years ago in the Millennium Declaration.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ukraine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Wade (*spoke in French*): As a Vice-President at this session, Senegal, through me, expresses to the President its heartfelt congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth regular session. In that election, I see a mark of confidence and a tribute to his wonderful country, Saint Lucia, but also to our entire sister community, the countries members of the Caribbean Community. He may therefore be assured of Senegal's full cooperation in the exercise of his important duties. Let me also express my sincere thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic, for the decisive results achieved during his term of office.

I should like to express my fraternal and friendly greetings to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to tell him how proud I am of the spirit of initiative, commitment and resolve that he has displayed with vigour and determination in his noble mission in the service of our common aspirations to peace, universalism and solidarity.

It is precisely in the name of those shared ideals that my country, Senegal, reaffirms once again its fervent support for the readmission of the Republic of China on Taiwan as a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. By doing that — without calling into question the participation and the legitimate status of any other Member of the great United Nations family — we would do justice to that country's 23 million hard-working and disciplined inhabitants, deeply attached to the values of peace, freedom and democracy enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Two years ago, on 11 September 2001, the world discovered the new face of international terrorism, right here and in all its horror. Certainly, other bloody attacks have taken place, here and elsewhere, before and since those tragic events; even the United Nations has not been spared. The attack that cost the life of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, High Commissioner for Human Rights, and those of many other United Nations staff, is a sinister reminder that the terrorist threat is now global in its targets and pernicious in its means of action. Indeed, a defender of human rights has been deprived of the most basic human right: the right to life.

Consequently, a collective, united, coordinated response is required at all levels. In that spirit, Senegal took the initiative on 17 October 2001 to call for an African anti-terrorism summit with a view to strengthening cooperation in that regard at the continental level, thus joining its efforts with the Algiers Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. It is still our conviction that Africa must not remain the soft underbelly of the system that is gradually being established to combat international terrorism in all its forms, in the wake of the armed conflicts and the humanitarian tragedies that have been causing bloodshed in the world.

With regard to the situation in Africa, Senegal salutes the significant progress achieved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Liberia. Those two friendly countries, afflicted by so many years of civil war, seem at last to have embarked on the path of negotiation and dialogue, an essential condition for a definitive return to peace. Moreover, Senegal welcomes the Security Council's decision to send a peacekeeping force to Liberia in support of the troops of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including the Senegalese troops already in place.

In the sisterly Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal welcomes the progress made in the national reconciliation process on the basis of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreements, in the hope that the incident that occurred two days ago will prove to be only a hitch. I encourage my Ivorian sisters and brothers to persevere on the path of reconciliation, cooperation and mutual confidence in order to safeguard that country's national unity and territorial integrity with the help of the ECOWAS interposition force under Senegalese command.

In many respects, sources of concern persist on the continent, particularly in West Africa, formerly known for its stability. I am thinking in particular of those who would call into question democratically elected regimes. We must say forcefully that the time must be past for coups d'état in Africa. Everyone must understand from now on that legitimate power, whose sole agent remains the people, cannot be acquired, preserved or transferred except by means of the ballot box — that is, through the force of law, not the law of force or that of weapons.

Senegal, for its part, is complying strictly with the Declaration of Algiers of 1999, which enshrines the principle of excluding from the proceedings of the African Union any regime established in violation of internal constitutional order. Last July, it was on the basis of that Declaration and thanks to the vigorous reaction of African countries — including mine — that constitutional legality was re-established only a few days after a coup d'état in Sao Tome and Principe. That example — that precedent — should serve as a lesson to anyone who might yet be tempted by this practice, which runs counter to democratic values.

Only 10 days ago in Guinea-Bissau, a democratically elected President was deposed by a group of officers. As soon as I was informed of this, I cited the position of the African Union in calling for the military to relinquish power. President Kufuor, Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States; President Chissano, President of the African Union; President Obasanjo of Nigeria; and I immediately took the situation in hand. This led to the establishment of an entirely civilian Government. From this rostrum, I should like to make a solemn appeal to the international community. Guinea-Bissau, a fraternal country bordering on Senegal, needs immediate assistance. Only diligent and consistent economic assistance can create the conditions for a lasting return to social peace and political and institutional stability in that country.

As Chairman of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Senegal remains gravely concerned by the deadlock in the peace process in the Middle East. Too much blood has been shed and too much suffering endured in that land holy to the three great revealed religions. And yet, one must face the fact that a peaceful solution is the sole, best guarantee of survival for all the peoples affected by daily death and anguish. We must pursue efforts to ensure a return to the negotiating table on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the principle of land for peace and the parameters established in the road map so that, at last, this long nightmare can yield to the oft-aborted dream of peoples who cherish peace and freedom.

However, if the words attributed to one Israeli authority are well founded, my country would warn against any attack on the physical integrity of President Yasser Arafat and against any decision of expulsion.

Any such act would have incalculable consequences. Senegal rejects and condemns violence in all its forms, regardless of who the victims and perpetrators may be or the reasons invoked, and reiterates its unfailing support for the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State within secure and internationally recognized borders, just as we have always recognized Israel's right to exist in the same conditions. I have the feeling, however, that if we confine ourselves to issuing statements without making any real effort to find a concrete solution, the tragedy that is unfolding before our eyes in cycles of violence will last a very long time.

The Israeli and Palestinian authorities have asked me, without my seeking it, to help them to settle this conflict, which is beginning to look like the Thirty Years War or even the Hundred Years War. Those authorities may recall simply that Senegal has resolved for itself one of the greatest contradictions of our time: the coexistence in one land of Muslims and Christians, who live in a ratio of 95 per cent to 5 per cent in our country. Christians, far from suffering from any discrimination, are fully integrated into national life, to the extent that a Christian has been the President of our Republic for 20 years and supported by Muslims. That is why I myself have turned to great thinkers and theoreticians on the issue of conflict to see if their words might be useful to us.

A compatriot of Jacques Chirac, Mr. Gaston Boutoul, invented the science of war and, more generally, of conflict known as polemology, the objective of which is to understand, through scientific analysis, the motivations and mechanisms of war and conflict. A sociological approach includes individual psychology, collective and social psychology, economics and the environment. I should like to subscribe to this approach and, in the light of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to make a modest contribution.

It seems to me that there are two possible approaches to the conflict: that of the "aggressor aggressed" theory and that of the "occupier occupied" theory. If we seek to identify who is in one category and who is in the other, we find ourselves in a complete impasse. Unfortunately, that is what each of the parties is doing. In the first scenario, Israelis and Palestinians each claim to be the aggressed and accuse each other of being the aggressor. In the second, while Israel is undeniably the occupier, it justifies this state of affairs by pointing to the so-called aggression of Palestinians. Hence, we return to the first theory and set in motion an endless cycle.

Let us not play this game, which is one of massacre for the parties to the conflict and of hide-and-seek on our side, where political and diplomatic interests cloud the search for an equitable solution.

The aim of my proposal is to move beyond the subjective approaches of the two parties by introducing external action, specifically on the part of the international community. Instead of pursuing the course of mutual accusation — which, it may be noted, leads nowhere because each party is subjective — I would simply propose that we eliminate the two problems by merging them into a single, unique problem. The dispatch of international forces to secure uncontested borders and the placing on "stand-by" status of the parts of the territory on which there is no consensus would eliminate de facto the two approaches of "occupier occupied" and "aggressor aggressed". I believe that this approach is all the more feasible and realistic in that Israel has declared itself prepared to return all the occupied territories — 90 per cent of them first and then negotiating a border correction to compensate for the other 10 per cent. That would allow us to abandon the two theories, which can only eternally pit the two parties against each other and divide the international community.

The greatest war of all time, that of 1939-1945, pitted French against German. Today, they no longer agonize over the question of who was the aggressor and who the aggressed, or of who was the occupier and who the occupied. All such issues have today been confined to history. All the parties have decided to join efforts in a cooperative project: the European Union. I would ask, therefore: Can we not dream of a post-war period in which Israel and Palestine can embark on real cooperation to the benefit of their two peoples?

As Members know, the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization ended in acknowledged failure just a few days ago in Cancún. Beyond that specific event, we need to reflect more in depth on the international trading system. There is something paradoxical in this system based on a liberal philosophy, but in which the rich countries spend over $1 billion a day in various subsidies for their own agricultural sectors. This ruinous practice leads to the freefall of the prices of our peasants' agricultural

commodities and threatens millions of jobs and the lives of over 2 billion human beings.

The hypothetical mechanism of limiting the perverse effects of subsidies can in no way be a credible solution to the enormous damage done to the developing countries. I believe that the time has come radically to rethink the mechanisms of international trade in order to break away from this implacable logic of injustice and inequity. In that context, I have taken the initiative of proposing to convene, every two years in Senegal, an "agricultural Davos" — an agricultural Dakar, rather — to encourage thinking on a credible alternative to the current system.

It is indeed in no one's interest for the present imbalances to persist, because they promote poverty, favour unemployment and destitution, and fuel the feelings of exclusion and despair that lead to extremism of all types. Once again, for us it is a question of calling not for assistance, but for the implementation of a minimum level of fairness in trade — free trade, but fair trade.

The challenges of globalization and interdependence that it entails forces us to devise new approaches that go beyond the obsolete assistance policies to create the conditions for a new kind of partnership, which alone is capable of breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. Senegal reiterates its commitment to implementing the 2001-2010 Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and renews its support for the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, whose activities deserve to be strengthened by the donor community in the framework of a trust fund established for that purpose.

The vision put forward by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is also relevant to the new kind of partnership just mentioned. For two years now, our continent has been carrying out a quiet revolution to firmly take its destiny in its own hands against the background of key factors such as peace, stability, good governance in the public and private sectors and regional cooperation. Specific plans have been developed and are available to all our partners.

We have been learning as we go along, by creating a gas pipeline in West Africa, for example, which will supply along 600 kilometres 3,640,000 cubic metres of gas starting from Nigeria to Benin, Ghana and Togo. The electricity grids in southern African that brings together the national electricity companies of 12 countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is another example of Africa's will to pool our resources. Today NEPAD has designated 14,000 kilometres of roads and just as many kilometres of railways to be laid, and this is one of our top priorities. In the area of new information and communications technology, fibre optics now link Europe and the United States to Dakar, Pretoria and Kuala Lumpur, with connections extending inside the continent. Those specific examples fully show our determination to make NEPAD a reality rather than a good intention or unrealistic plan.

On a continent where everything still needs to be built, it is not a matter of the need to identify opportunities but rather to seize them. On the whole, we are committed to creating an environment in which there will be a clear interest in investment and secure business operations. On a different order, the African Peer Review Mechanism has been launched, and colleagues before me have already spoken about it.

Together with our partners, we are ready to fulfil the goals of NEPAD. In a few days, some African heads of State will be in Tokyo to establish cooperative ties between Japan and Africa through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development.

In a report on the state of the international community, the Secretary-General made an analysis that sounded alarm bells: the world does not seem to be sharing much anymore. The collective security machinery established by the Charter is already threatened. The United Nations system inherited from the Second World War no longer sufficiently meets the challenges of the twenty-first century. He therefore calls for the implementation of reform, as spelled out in the Millennium Declaration.

Let us explore together the guidelines that were established by the Secretary-General. Let us make way for a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, which bears the fertile seeds for consensus, understanding and peaceful coexistence. Let us resist the temptation of isolationism and rule of force, for as Jean-Jacques Rousseau rightly said in "The Social Contract": "The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into law, and obedience into duty." Let us ensure that, however diverse we may be, the universal values of

peace, freedom, democracy and respect for human rights will always be safeguarded.

I take this occasion to voice my support for the position expressed by President Bush against the heinous sex trade and other forms of slavery. Instead of vague, futile statements of intention, let us all agree to a realistic platform and guarantee that specific measures are taken. In that regard, we can justly raise questions on the follow-up to commitments undertaken at the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development.

Concerning all these issues vital to humanity's survival, the United Nations must, in accordance with the Charter, ensure that its mission remain clearly in sight, a mission that is a focal point at which our efforts towards humanity's common goals are harmonized.

I strongly believe that this need corresponds to the legitimate aspirations of all the peoples whom we represent here.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Major-General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Major-General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Major-General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kabila (*spoke in French*): Allow me, Sir, to discharge the agreeable duty of congratulating Mr. Julian Hunte on his unanimous election to the Presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth regular session. I would also like to commend your predecessor, His Excellence Mr. Jan Kavan, who fulfilled his mandate to the satisfaction of all.

I note the efforts and specific involvement of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in the peaceful resolution of the complex crisis in the Great Lakes region and Central Africa. The Congolese people continue to be grateful to the United Nations system for the assistance that it gave it through the United Nation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Interim Emergency Multinational Force deployed in Bunia and especially for strengthening the peacekeeping mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

The Congolese delegation associates itself with the spirit of sympathy and solidarity elicited by the terrorist attack committed in Iraq against the great family of the United Nations. Indeed, the Congolese people were also deeply moved to learn of the brutal and tragic death of the ardent defender of freedom and human rights, Sergio Vieira de Mello, to whom I pay tribute.

At a time when the entire world remembers the tragic events of 11 September 2001 in this very city of New York, the United Nations was still mourning the loss of its staff and fell victim yet again to a terrorist attack in Iraq. The Congolese people renew their unequivocal condemnation of international terrorism. Africa is not spared from the scourge of terrorism. It is enough to recall the tragic events in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Casablanca.

This session coincides with the final phase of the process of the establishment of transitional institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is here that I would like to express my gratitude to the international community, because its efforts, support and assistance in this peace process led to the signing and implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement.

It is the hope of the people of the Congo and the Transitional Government to see the United Nations redouble its efforts and pursue its support for the process of peace and reunification now underway. At a time when this lengthy war is coming to an end, it should be noted that the Ituri district is still a gaping wound that the slightest careless mistake could inflame. While the deployment of the Interim Emergency Multinational Force in Bunia allowed for a sharp reduction in acts of violence and contributed to

stabilization of the security and humanitarian situation, the situation in the provinces of North and South Kivu remain of concern.

It is important that neighbouring countries respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo so as to recreate a climate conducive to a return to the normalization of relations in the region.

Aside from the numerous human lives affected by this war, the plants and the animals have also endured immeasurable damage. Our determination to restore everything that was destroyed is equalled only by our hope of turning our country into an oasis of peace for all. We believe that a United Nations fund to support this effort would be fair compensation.

All the present efforts of the Transition Government for the reunification of the national territory, the pacification of the country, the reconstruction of infrastructure and the restoration of State authority are working to achieve the ultimate objective of transition, namely, the holding of free, transparent and democratic elections. It is in that context that my country voices the hope that the international community will provide the necessary assistance at all stages of the electoral process.

In the peace process now underway, an area which is of critical importance and an imperative is that of independent justice, whose equitable administration would mark the end of impunity. On the domestic level, the Transition Government is working to conclude successfully the reform advocated here, for equitable justice is the real proof of national reconciliation.

On the international level we believe that the major objective is the establishment, with the assistance of the United Nations, of an international criminal tribunal for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to deal with crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, including rape used as a weapon of war, and mass violations of human rights. Moreover, to ensure the best possible coverage for protection of human rights, as well as of humanitarian rights, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has ratified several international conventions, including the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court.

Given the important provision for the protection of human rights contained in that Statute, the Congo, on the basis of respect for fundamental principles that govern international relations, intends to see that there is strict respect for the implementation of that instrument.

As one can see, a new era has dawned in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an era of peace and reconciliation, of national unity and the re-establishment of State authority, an era of reconstruction, economic recovery and development to consolidate and put to use the gains of arduous political negotiations.

Aware of challenges and looking toward the post-conflict period, the Transition Government has placed the well-being of the Congolese people at the centre of its concerns. It intends to imprint on its programme the requisite good governance, as well as macroeconomic management that ensures the security of investments, respects social rights and guarantees protection and legal and judicial security for employment, business and foreign investment.

We remain aware of the importance of sharing those resources likely to contribute to economic integration, and we intend to conduct a policy of dialogue, openness and good-neighbourliness. The priority given to regional integration is a sign of our adherence to the initiative of the international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the region of the Great Lakes and of Central Africa. The Congolese people consider the holding of this forum a historic opportunity that must be seized so that it can lead to the application of fundamental principles of international law.

As we are determined to maintain good neighbourly relations and relations of mutual respect with border countries, and thus refuse to serve as a rear-guard base for subversive movements against the countries surrounding us, we in turn will reject interference or destabilization from neighbouring countries.

For us there is a need to do everything possible in order to build peace in the region and to effectively affirm: a spirit of solidarity, of sharing and of peaceful coexistence at the regional and global level; the fight against poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic; control of the movement and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which are claiming victims every day; and the campaign against the proliferation of antipersonnel mines.

Throughout my statement I have condemned terrorism in all forms. I also spoke of the consequences of the bloody, unjust and unacceptable war which has just devastated the fundamental infrastructure of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I have also referred to the significant progress made in the peace process underway while emphasizing the importance of the support of the international community for the success of that process, which will culminate in the organization of elections.

We are aware and convinced that it is within our power to play a stabilizing role in Central and Southern Africa upon which the stability and economic recovery of the region depend.

I conclude by reaffirming the will of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to cooperate with the international community in building a better world that is designed to build peace and greater solidarity among peoples and nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Major-General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea joins preceding delegations in congratulating the President on his election to preside over the work of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We know that it is a very difficult task, Sir, because it is your task to organize the debates of this the greatest deliberative organ of the United Nations at a time when the Organization — and the international community — are experiencing a crisis unprecedented in its history.

However, Sir, we have confidence in your political and diplomatic ability and in the maturity and prudence of your country in dealing with international problems; thus we are optimistic that our deliberations will meet with the greatest success.

We also congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his tireless efforts to ensure that the United Nations fulfils its mission of peace in the various armed conflicts, its humanitarian action in response to the disasters affecting many countries and its efforts to promote peace negotiations and multiple forms of cooperation in order to achieve sustainable development in the world.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea expresses before the Assembly its serious concern at the current international situation, which is manifestly affecting international peace and security, which the United Nations was created to safeguard. Indeed, since the end of the cold war, which gave rise to hope for a more united, cooperative, integrated and peaceful world of greater solidarity, it has seemed that the principle rules governing international relations have been steadily losing force, with the risk that each State will act according to its own will.

The concepts of democracy, human rights and technical cooperation and assistance are being misused to the detriment of some, and are being exploited to the benefit of others. The concept of democracy, which is understood as governing according to the will of each people, has today been transformed into a demand imposed by certain States in violation of the universal principle that every State is free to adopt the political system that best suits it. Furthermore, the principles of State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, enshrined in international law, have been violated in recent years under the pretext of the need for humanitarian intervention, which are often conducted without United Nations approval.

The efforts to establish a new international economic order that ensures cooperation for global development have ended in the division of the world into North and South, and political conditions are now being imposed on the cooperative assistance that is

offered. Efforts towards the globalization of economic policies have not recognized the weak position of underdeveloped countries, which suffer grave disadvantages in participating and competing in the so-called globalization of the world. We believe that the policy of globalization needs to include a special programme for the sustainable development of developing countries in order to help them attain the level of maturity necessary to benefit from such an integration. In all these efforts to achieve international cooperation for global development, there are good intentions, but the decisive will needed to build a fairer and more equitable world has been lacking. Meanwhile, the situation of the weakest countries deteriorates, the economic crisis worsens, political upheaval spreads and Governments are taking a harsher stance to protect their power.

Internal warfare, mercenaries and terrorism are taking root because, as occurred in the Middle Ages, the people cannot bear hunger and poverty and are driven to civil disobedience. At the same time, the United Nations is losing its authority because its decision-making organs are not democratic, and its capacity for humanitarian assistance falls short because of the proliferation of disasters caused by wars and acts of terrorism.

In our opinion, and most regrettably, humanity is already dehumanized and the United Nations has lost its authority. We must now shoulder the responsibility of rebuilding our policies and of morally rebuilding the Organization and restoring its authority. It is the only world body capable of representing humanity with authority and the only one in which we can achieve universal consensus.

It is here that we can fight terrorism and organized crime, because everything is listened to and everything is discussed in this forum. The use of weapons against terrorism could turn us into terrorists ourselves. Thus my delegation naturally and energetically condemns the terrorist attack against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which caused the death of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, and those of some 30 staff working in the service of peace. We express our deep condolences at the loss of those noble workers in the service of humanity. We therefore believe that now is the time to adopt strategies so that United Nations peacekeeping missions will not be confused with any interests other than the peaceful settlement of hostilities.

As for my country, Equatorial Guinea is faithful to its commitments as a full-fledged Member of the United Nations and a member of the African Union, committed to the maintenance of peaceful relations of friendship and cooperation with other countries. We respect the sovereignty, national unity, territorial integrity and inalienable rights of other States within their borders, and we favour the promotion of the socio-political development of nations.

In that connection, Equatorial Guinea is a party to all international conventions that protect the political, economic and sociocultural rights of peoples. Democracy, as the consensus of the people, is a reality in which our country is immersed, with the coexistence of the 13 political parties that constitute it, observing the commitments of the binding national political pact between the Government and the opposition. Undoubtedly, today the formation of a broad-based Government is the greatest exponent of peace and political stability that my country has ever known.

In order to ensure such internal political consensus and cooperation with other countries and international organizations, we believe that transparency is absolutely necessary, because it benefits all parties. Equatorial Guinea offers open and unrestricted cooperation to everyone, on the basis of transparent action, for everyone's mutual benefit. Nevertheless, we are aware that our possibilities are very limited as far as acquiring modern technology and laying the foundations for sustained and sustainable and development are concerned. Therefore, we request international cooperation in that regard from friendly countries and from international assistance organizations.

I conclude by expressing the hope that the United Nations will recover its leadership in promoting the peace and development of our world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho and invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): My delegation associates itself with the compliments expressed to Mr. Julian Hunte on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session; to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic; and to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

As we converge upon this city of New York, we are once again reminded of the stark reality of the scourge of terrorism, whose effects have reverberated across the world. Earlier this month two years ago, in this very city, humanity suffered the worst threat ever visited on it by terrorism. We continue to share the grief of those who will forever miss the love and the support of their loved ones. We must therefore reaffirm our resolve to join together in partnership to eliminate those elements which threaten to destroy humanity and its way of life.

Our best hope for success is — and should be — our collective strength. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations of humankind to pool our resources and strategies to annihilate the scourge of terrorism. In doing so, we must simultaneously and genuinely examine and begin to understand what forces and factors drive an inherently good human being to commit such desperate actions and drastic acts of violence, in the process committing them not only against others, but against himself. Our preventive measures must address such forces and factors in order to disarm potential terrorists.

The progress report on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in Lesotho documents that the single greatest obstacle to the development of our nation — and indeed to reaching the objectives laid out in the Goals — is the scourge of HIV/AIDS. In our part of the world, Southern Africa, Governments are overwhelmed by high levels of morbidity and mortality, especially among the working-age group in all sectors, including health and agriculture. HIV/AIDS has become the leading cause of the food insecurity and famine that plague so many of our people today.

We are also frustrated because our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of education for all by 2015 through the introduction of free primary education is faltering due to the high rate of absenteeism by both teachers and pupils. Teachers are sick and dying. Children — especially girls — are dropping out of school to take care of their sick relatives. The number of malnourished, traumatized, orphaned and out-of-school children is increasing at an alarming rate. We therefore stress the need for urgent assistance to Lesotho and the southern African region and increased supplies of the anti-retroviral and other related HIV and AIDS drugs, in order to curb the scourge. Lesotho and the region also need financial and technical resources for training and capacity-building in HIV and AIDS programme implementation and management.

Lesotho is concerned that the goal of poverty eradication, which is the first Millennium Development Goal and one of the cross-cutting themes of all major United Nations conferences and summits, could elude the international community. Indeed, this critical state of affairs is highlighted in the *Economic Report on Africa, 2003*, which indicates that in 2002, of the 53 countries in Africa, only five achieved the 7 per cent growth rate required to meet the Millennium Development Goals, while 43 countries registered growth rates below 7 per cent and five countries registered negative growth rates.

Against the backdrop of a democratizing continent — a precondition set for assistance by the developed North — there is a growing consensus that the decline in official development assistance and other financial flows to Africa is increasing the

marginalization of the continent in the global economy. Without new inflows of external resources, the pace of development in Africa will forever remain elusive. My delegation therefore wishes to reiterate its appeal to the developed countries to fulfil the commitments made at all the major United Nations conferences, as well as at the Millennium Summit.

Furthermore, we wish to stress the need for a review of the list of heavily indebted poor countries and those on the borderline, so that all poor countries that, like Lesotho, face debt servicing difficulties, can be considered under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. My delegation also shares the view that debt cancellation for the least developed countries should be considered as a viable option so that such countries can inject that money into their economies.

My delegation reiterates the call for increased support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). We are aware that Iraq today dominates the world spotlight, as was confirmed in recent testimony before the Congress of the United States of America, which was asked to approve $87 billion for the rehabilitation of that country. In sharp contrast, an injection of only about $6 billion into NEPAD would go a long way towards achieving what is a continentwide agenda.

African leaders need extensive support as they address, inter alia, the root causes of the agricultural crises in the continent. For us in Africa, agriculture is the engine of overall growth, as it is at the very core of people's livelihoods, especially in the rural areas. It is linked to issues of food security and affects growth in other economic sectors.

Lesotho is deeply concerned that armed conflicts continue to hinder economic growth in Africa and elsewhere. We have also been shocked by several reports of an extreme lack of respect for the basic principles of international humanitarian law on the part of parties to armed conflict. Equally regrettable are incidents of egregious violations of the rights of women and children. We therefore commend the United Nations for all its efforts aimed at the elimination of human suffering in armed conflict. Indeed, the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunals, the birth of the International Criminal Court and the setting up of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, are cause for considerable optimism and prove beyond any doubt that the world has grown weary of impunity. It is our fervent hope that Member States will continue to provide the necessary support and cooperation to those institutions.

The President took the Chair.

Africa hungers for peace. The continent must never again have to witness acts of violence and atrocities such as those that were recently committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. We hope that the international community will continue to support all endeavours aimed at attaining lasting peace, security and stability in those countries.

My delegation is encouraged by the progress to date to restore law and order in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the establishment of an all-inclusive transitional Government of National Unity. The international community must intensify its efforts to assist millions of Congolese people who are not only displaced but also facing serious food shortages. My delegation is confident that, with the necessary support, the Government of National Unity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will restore peace and security in the country and heal the deep wounds caused by war and ethnic hatred. We are also gratified that the Security Council has mandated a special Panel to investigate the plunder of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is our hope and wish that those responsible will be brought to book.

The people of Angola have peace at last, now that one of Africa's longest-running fratricidal wars has come to an end. The scars of war in Angola will remain forever, deeply embedded in the memories of the most vulnerable of the population — the women and children of that country, where motherhood was abused and children were deprived of their childhood. Reintegration and rehabilitation assistance to Angola, therefore, should, in the main, target those groups.

The future of Somalia continues to hang in the balance, despite the efforts by Kenya, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, the African Union and all other stakeholders to put an end to the carnage in that country. Somalia has been turned into a breeding ground for warlords who have no respect for human life but are greedy for power and money. We tend to agree with those who argue that the deployment of an international force would help to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

At the end of the day, however, the responsibility for bringing peace and reconciliation to Somalia lies with the Somalis themselves.

Although there have been positive indicators in the search for a peaceful and acceptable solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, we are concerned that the recent resumption of the cycle of violence will render the road map for peace futile. The drastic and repressive measures, the unilateral erection of a wall dividing the two, the reoccupation of Palestinian towns and villages, and the targeting of Hamas leaders with the aim of killing them are all measures which cannot help the course of peace or ensure that the Palestinian people enjoy their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination in a sovereign and independent State. In like manner, the continuing suicide missions by militant groups to kill Israelis indiscriminately cannot, and must not, be condoned or justified.

But then two stark realities must be addressed: first, that the root cause of the problem is the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands; and secondly, that no one country can be an honest broker in the Middle East. History itself positions some countries so much with one party to the conflict that they cannot — even with the best of intentions — be non-partisan. Consequently, my delegation strongly urges the United Nations to take the initiative and to lead the process, and thus to lend legitimacy and credibility to the efforts to find an abiding solution.

The same goes for the people of Western Sahara. In the civilized world of the twenty-first century, it is simply untenable that we still have colonizers in some parts of the world, in disregard of the widely accepted principles of self-determination and democracy. The international community must intervene so as to bring finality to the status of the Saharawi Arab Dêmocratic Republic. The brotherly people of Sahara have suffered unduly and long enough.

On a positive note, we welcome the lifting of sanctions against Libya by the Security Council. Nevertheless, it is our contention that the lifting of the sanctions would have been more significant if all the members of the Security Council had raised their flags in favour.

By the same token, it is now time to collectively address all issues relating to the unilateral economic blockade against Cuba. It is simply untenable for the United Nations to look on helplessly when a Member State strangles another Member State of this body, simply because it holds or practices different economic philosophies or political viewpoints. Those truths must be confronted and discussed in honesty and without malice towards anyone. Otherwise, our credibility and our raison d'être are called into question.

In conclusion, I wish to refer to the question of the reform of the Security Council. It is now a trite fact that the credibility of the United Nations — including its adherence to multilateralism — is being openly questioned. It will take a lot of work to change that perception on the part of many, especially in the developing world. The Secretary-General, Mr. Annan, has on several occasions stressed the need for radical reform to restore United Nations credibility. We therefore applaud the statement that he made before this body yesterday that he intends to establish a high-level panel of eminent persons to look into the challenges to peace, security and other global issues. It is our hope that the recommendations of that panel will pave the way to a better international order.

It has been almost 10 years since the establishment of an open-ended working group to study all questions relating to equitable representation in the Security Council, including increasing the membership of the Council. My delegation is of the view that there is an urgent need to accelerate the pace and to redouble our efforts to bring this matter to a conclusion. Let us face it: the very concept and practice of a veto in the Security Council is simply untenable and is totally at variance with the democratic principles of our modern times. For one member with a veto to overrule 14 others is simply undemocratic. It is patently unjust and contrary to every principle underpinning fair play and world order. My delegation cannot — in all honesty and without malice to anyone — understand how and why leading champions of democracy can cling so desperately to such an outmoded, primitive and unjust system. The same sacred convictions, truths and beliefs that guided and forced our forbears to abolish slavery, to declare racism and genocide crimes against humanity and to preach and uphold the equality of all humans must of necessity guide us in this instance. Otherwise, history will judge and chastise us severely — but justifiably — as dishonest. Such is the naked truth staring us in the face.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and

Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Saufatu Sopoanga, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu.

Mr. Saufatu Sopoanga, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Saufatu Sopoanga, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Sopoanga (Tuvalu): The people of Tuvalu, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak, wish me first of all to convey their warmest greetings to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We express congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election. Coming from a small island country as well, we hold your election in high regard and wish you success in your presidency. We also commend the outgoing President, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his excellent leadership in the General Assembly this past year.

A year ago, we reflected on the events of 11 September 2001. On the eve of this session, we were horrified yet again by the brutal terrorist attacks on the United Nations in Iraq, which killed some of the Organization's finest, including its Special Envoy, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello. Tuvalu strongly condemns those acts and has joined in the great number of condolences to the Secretary-General, to his staff and to the families of the victims.

The recent wave of terror attacks and the havoc they have created worldwide have instilled a sense of fear and uncertainty. They have not only proved the existence of forces bent on destroying the very foundation of the United Nations, they have also underscored the urgency with which we must collectively combat those forces. As a small island developing country, Tuvalu's greatest fear is that, in the wake of such events, developed countries will lack the resolve to address as well the developmental and environmental issues that are so fundamental to lasting international peace and security.

In Tuvalu, and the Pacific in general, our isolation, fragmentation and lack of infrastructure and manpower leave us vulnerable to terrorism. This threatens our security, especially the security of our traditional and cultural practices upon which our very existence depends. Likewise, this also threatens the security of the world. We are therefore grateful for the anti-terrorism efforts of the United Nations in cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum and through direct contact with national authorities.

For our part, I am pleased to say that Tuvalu is committed to acceding to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols, as well as United Nations conventions against terrorism, including the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. In this spirit, we are also committed to regional security arrangements, as set out by the Pacific Islands Forum.

But to fulfil our international obligations on anti-terrorism, we need technical and financial assistance. More importantly, capacity-building through appropriate education and human development, for which we seek the support of the international community, is vitally important to strengthen our resilience in the face of such vulnerabilities.

Conflict prevention is vital to national, regional and world peace. Tuvalu shares the view that conflicts are best resolved through dialogue and mutual understanding of the root causes. The United Nations must continue to address the underlying causes of conflicts and be the common forum where nations resolve their differences. Attempts to resolve conflicts by unilateral means outside the United Nations inevitably result in ongoing mistrust and instability. The stakes are too high to allow this to happen. We must continue to engage in constructive dialogue.

Let me briefly speak on a related matter. Each year, highly radioactive and toxic material passes through the Pacific by ship on its way to and from north Asia and Europe. It is known that some of the materials are weapons-grade. We are concerned about

these shipments because of the massive threat they pose to the Pacific Ocean — a vital source of our livelihoods and economic development. We would like these shipments to cease for the sake of the inhabitants of the islands and stability of the broader Pacific basin.

We believe the United Nations has a very important peacekeeping role to play, and are therefore grateful for the progress made by the United Nations in restoring peace in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. We hope that the United Nations will continue its support there, to ensure meaningful opportunities and peace for the people of Bougainville.

Tuvalu noted, however, the manner in which the United Nations has handled the conflict in the Solomon Islands. As a small island and a least developed country, similarly susceptible to instability, we strongly feel that the United Nations must better respond to Member States' concerns, irrespective of political affiliations. The United Nations is a body for all nations, and all nations should be afforded the assistance required of it.

In the same spirit, Tuvalu places significant importance on the need to treat everybody equally, as enshrined in the Charter. Accordingly, Tuvalu believes that to deny representation at the United Nations to the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan, who are active and responsible participants in world affairs, especially in trade, commerce and international development, is unjust and morally wrong. Their significant contributions to technology and their own need for access to international support to combat the challenges of terrorism and health epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) cannot be continually ignored.

In our view the United Nations, which prides itself on the protection of fundamental human rights, including the right to self-determination, and which upholds the dignity and worth of the human being, cannot continue to turn a blind eye to ignore the obvious realities of the situation. Just as the people of Taiwan have so responsibly contributed to international development, they also need the support of the international community. Their continuing isolation could potentially give rise to serious conflicts.

Tuvalu would therefore like to call on this august body to seriously and urgently consider the issue of membership of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations and its agencies.

On 1 October, Tuvalu will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of its independence. On reflection, we are grateful for the support of the international community, particularly from Tuvalu's traditional development and regional partners over the past quarter century. Guided by the principles of good governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights, democracy and self-determination, to which we are deeply committed, and with the help of such support, Tuvalu has been able to prosper and enjoy a peaceful and equal coexistence with the rest of the world. Our future survival as a nation is founded on these basic United Nations values.

Despite relative stability, we live in constant fear of the adverse impact of climate change. For a coral-atoll nation, sea level rise and more severe weather events loom as a growing threat to our entire population. The threat is real and serious, and we liken it to a slow and insidious form of terrorism against us.

In this respect, Tuvalu is actively participating in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, and we are extremely grateful to all the nations that have joined us in resolving this threat. Nevertheless, we are deeply dismayed that key industrialized nations do not share our concern. Climate change affects all nations.

This is not just a problem for small island States like our own. We believe that all nations must take positive steps to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. But we also believe that the industrialized world must act first. It is the emissions from the past that are creating the problems of today. Steps must be taken to account for and redress the emissions of the past. We implore all nations to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, as this is the only appropriate process that will bring about effective collective action to resolve this growing threat.

As Tuvalu moves into the twenty-first century, we are also challenged by the many changes that are taking place in the world, especially those brought about by globalization. Never before have we faced such complex challenges. Yet, for Tuvalu and others like us, while we witness every day the forces of trade, communications and travel creating a single global community, the problems of poverty, marginalization and environmental decline continue to plague many parts of the world.

The recent breakdown in discussions on international trade in Cancún, Mexico, clearly shows

that we live in a very complex world. If nothing else, the Cancún meeting was a significant step forward for the voice of the developing world. No longer are the developing nations willing to accept the rhetoric of those who want to impose a trade regime that tends to favour the wealthy and marginalize the poor.

Tuvalu and many island States are in a particularly weak position to take advantage of the opportunities presented by globalization. There is a genuine need to better recognize the special case of small island developing States and of their need to participate in a more equitable globalized world.

Sustainable development, particularly for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable States, especially for small island least developed countries is crucial. Of course, we recognize that the primary responsibility for sustainable development rests with each country, on its own terms. However, as a poorly resourced small island least developed countries, even the best efforts to escape the cycle of poverty and marginalization are doomed without the support of the international community, civil society and the private sector.

Tuvalu and those like us are encouraged by the commitment of the international community to addressing poverty and development challenges, as contained in the Millennium Development Goals, Millennium Declaration and other various United Nations development frameworks. But these will remain mere rhetoric unless they translate into real development that can make a difference on the ground.

In that regard, proper and effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is crucial for the development of countries like Tuvalu. To that end, conducting a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in the lead up to the International Meeting in Mauritius next year is imperative. We kindly request the United Nations Secretariat to undertake this analysis as a matter of high priority so that we can learn from the past and move forward in a more positive way.

That said, however, the overall decline in official development assistance in real terms is cause for serious concern. Despite pledges at the Monterrey Conference, major industrialized nations are not fulfilling the minimum target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product. For small island States, that reluctance translates into lower economic growth, as well as into widening the gap between the least developed countries and the industrialized nations. Tuvalu therefore appeals to the donor countries to make serious efforts to meet the United Nations minimum official development assistance target to enable the least developed countries to attain a better quality of life for all their peoples.

In conclusion, for atoll island States like Tuvalu, efforts aimed at sustainable development, peace and security will be meaningless unless the issue of climate change is addressed with urgency. As has been warned by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change in its Third Assessment Report, the threat of global warming and rising sea levels is serious business. Addressing these threats requires a global effort by both industrialized and developing countries, consistent with the objectives of, and the commitments made in, the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Again, Tuvalu's interest in enforcing the Kyoto Protocol is not self-serving. The consequences of not urgently enforcing Kyoto will be felt everywhere around the world. Tuvalu appeals to the countries that can make the difference to ratify the Kyoto Protocol as a matter of urgency. As we in Tuvalu celebrate our Silver Jubilee anniversary, and as we look forward into the future, it is our hope that out of this great Hall there will emerge better understanding and good will, to further solidify the foundation upon which the long-lasting security and survival of Tuvalu and many others is built and for peace in the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Saufatu Sopoanga, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Right Honourable Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius

The President: The Assembly will hear a statement by Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Right Honourable Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth (Mauritius): Let me first extend to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation and in my own name, our sincere congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at this session. Indeed, it is a matter of pride for all small island States, and Mauritius in particular, to see you presiding over the Assembly. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation during your tenure of office.

Let me also express my Government's deepest appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic, for the remarkable manner in which he presided over the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dedicated leadership of our Organization. I wish to assure him of our full support in his appeal for radical reforms of our Organization and the setting up of a high-level panel to address the issues of peace and security, and institutional reform.

Since we were here last autumn, many events of global importance have occurred. The war against Iraq was waged and hostilities were declared at an end, but peace and stability in Iraq have yet to be restored.

Terrorism has continued relentlessly on its path of ghastly attacks and indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians. The geographical shift, however, in the terrorist attacks is becoming increasingly a disturbing development.

Multilateralism, which was almost condemned to a premature burial, is being re-energized. Unfortunately, the recurring problems of HIV/AIDS, malaria, poverty, lack of development, conflicts and the ready supply of small arms and light weapons have continued to inflict death and suffering on an unprecedented scale, particularly in Africa.

The attack against the United Nations compound in Baghdad contains countless messages. The most significant of them is that our Organization is in urgent need of major overhaul and reform, as rightly stated by the Secretary-General.

The premature deaths of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Iraq, the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, and other dedicated staff members of the United Nations, whom we deeply mourn, should make us reflect on the dangers behind foreign policy initiatives that undermine or ignore the United Nations.

The international community is deeply attached to the legitimacy the United Nations confers on its actions. It is our collective duty to refrain from taking any measures likely to weaken it.

These horrendous terrorist acts have demonstrated anew the crucial need for the international community to tackle the root causes of terrorism.

As all small islands, we in Mauritius remain highly vulnerable in respect of our security and terrorist threats. With limited means at our disposal, coupled with the multiple demands on our scanty resources, we find that it is only through international efforts and cooperation that we can win the war against terrorism. We are particularly anxious that there should be concerted and sustained action and a commitment to cooperation at the international level with a view to eradicating the scourge of terrorism. All countries must cooperate to stem the flow of cross-border infiltration. The financing of terrorism and the proceeds of transnational organized crime need to be closely monitored.

Not winning the war against terrorism as well as that against transnational organized crime is not an option for the world today. Mauritius views with concern that, despite the stated commitment of the international community to the cause of disarmament, the actions of many countries do not match their rhetoric.

The new challenges to security and disarmament should compel us to look anew at the potential threat posed by nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and to pursue more vigorously efforts towards their total elimination.

We reiterate our appeal to the nuclear Powers for the early convening of a conference on nuclear disarmament as a first step towards complete disarmament, keeping in mind that such a regime must be comprehensive and non-discriminatory.

Over the last year the international community's ability to tackle political conflicts and find lasting solutions has been dismal.

The situation in the Middle East continues to preoccupy us. Despite the various initiatives, including the latest Road Map, violence remains unabated and we fear that recent developments in the region will unleash further killings and destruction.

No solution will be possible there unless all the protagonists are taken on board. Exclusion as a policy is destined to fail. We continue to believe that President Arafat is an essential part of the solution, and any attempt to sideline him will be detrimental to any peace initiative.

We call on both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to exercise utmost restraint and to pursue their efforts for the implementation of the Road Map with a view to putting an end to the occupation and the succeeding generations of Palestinians in refugee camps. The establishment of a Palestinian State at the earliest should be the priority of the international community.

The situation in Iraq is disquieting. It is important that the Iraqis regain as soon as possible total sovereignty and assume control over their own destiny through a democratic process. The United Nations has, in the view of my delegation, a leading role to play in this process and must be empowered to do so.

The African continent has been plagued for too long by conflicts and wars, which have led to the loss of thousands of innocent lives and the squandering of enormous wealth and resources. Small arms and light weapons have in fact become the weapons of mass destruction on the African continent. These weapons drain African resources and we appeal to those countries that manufacture and market those weapons of destruction to ensure that Africa does not continue to be their killing field.

Nonetheless, during the past two years, the African continent has demonstrated an unprecedented momentum in its efforts to seriously address these conflicts and to search for lasting solutions. There is, however, some good news out of Africa and everything is not gloomy.

The transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union, the coming into operation of the various commissions of the Union and the election of commissioners on a gender-equal basis at the Maputo Summit in July last are clear indications that Africa has chosen a new path and is confident that it will be able to meet the challenges ahead.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that peace is now slowly returning to the troubled areas on the continent. The conflicts in Sierra Leone and Angola have ended. A government of national unity is in office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Efforts under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for a comprehensive and lasting resolution to the conflict in Somalia have been crowned with success. We do recognize that years of conflict will not be easily forgotten, but what is reassuring is that African leaders are maintaining a hands-on approach to these situations.

The recent developments in Liberia and the restoration of the constitutional order in Sao Tome and Principe confirm the ability of African leaders to effectively address issues affecting their continent.

There is fresh confidence in the African leaders' ability to deal with flashpoints. The implementation of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union will go a long way towards preventive action being taken. We recognize that we will have to bear primary responsibility for the peace and security of our continent.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is our basic instrument of empowerment. Having decided to take our destiny in our own hands, we are not going to engage in the blame game, but we will take action to reverse poverty and to promote good governance. We will do whatever is necessary to attract investment. The establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism within NEPAD will ensure that economic development takes place in the spirit of good governance, democracy, transparency and accountability.

It is comforting, therefore, that this homegrown African initiative has received global recognition. The assistance of the Group of Eight and countries like India in the implementation of the objectives of NEPAD is much appreciated.

We noted with regret that the rate of official development assistance to developing countries is decreasing, contrary to the commitment made in Monterrey.

We therefore call on the developed countries and other key specialized institutions in the monetary, financial and development fields to deliver on their implementation plans for the Monterrey Consensus during the October high-level dialogue.

Monday's high-level segment on HIV/AIDS, in which more than a hundred delegations took part, demonstrates the extent of the concern of the United Nations membership to the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. We welcome the initiative of the General Assembly to maintain global awareness of the problem and to ensure that effective action is taken urgently to stop the spread of the pandemic.

I mentioned earlier the need for reform of our Organization. It is imperative that the necessary reforms of the United Nations be undertaken to reflect in a more realistic manner the political realities in the world today.

The United Nations Charter must be amended to provide for a Security Council that is more democratic and more representative of today's world. Should permanent membership of the Security Council with veto power be retained, we consider that India should be admitted with such a membership at the earliest. Likewise we believe that the African continent should be adequately represented at the same level.

We would also urge a review of the veto power, which has been used in the past and continues to be used for purposes outside the letter and spirit of the Charter.

May I welcome the decision of the Security Council to lift the sanctions on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

The situation of small island developing States (SIDS) will be the focus of attention in September 2004, when Mauritius hosts an international meeting for the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action. This Barbados +10 meeting will allow us to make a full assessment of the Programme of Action and evaluate its success and shortcomings.

We need to constantly remind the international community about the fragility and vulnerability of SIDS where ecology and geography combine to inflict irreparable damage.

Mauritius and all other small island developing States attach great importance to this international meeting and hope that it will harness more efforts on the part of the international community to provide the required assistance to the small island developing States. I call on this Assembly to lend the necessary support to make this international meeting a success.

In this regard, let me express my appreciation to the Commonwealth and La Francophonie for their active interest in supporting the cause of small island States.

As the current Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), may I inform the Assembly that the 44 Alliance Member States and Observers consider the International Meeting to be a very important occasion for reaffirming the partnership for sustainable development that grew out of the Rio Conference. In Mauritius next year we expect to establish an appropriate framework for partnership and cooperation. The time has come to enshrine the special case of Small Island Developing States as an important component of focus and attention on the part of the international community.

We appeal to the international community to support this process and ensure the full and effective participation of all SIDS at the meeting and to ensure, as well, its own participation in it.

Access to information and communication technologies remains a fundamental concern in Africa. While such technologies are often promoted as an instrument that will allow countries to leapfrog stages in development, there is a real fear that the digital divide could very well prove to be yet another handicap that adds to Africa's marginalization.

We therefore urge that particular attention be paid to issues of access and infrastructure. My delegation wishes to underscore that Mauritius, like many other small island States, has high hopes that the Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society will provide concrete action in favour of small island developing States, whose geographical isolation, remoteness and other inherent constraints warrant special attention.

The failure of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference at Cancún has dealt a blow to the multilateral trading system. That is very unfortunate, as there are no winners but only losers. For small developing countries in particular, a strong rules-based global trading system provides protection

against the unilateralism of powerful trading countries or blocs. The serious imbalances in the WTO system, coupled with the lack of effective and operational rules and disciplines to address their development concerns, resulted the failure of Cancún. We should pick up the pieces from Cancún and try to construct a trading system that guarantees equity and fairness for developing countries. Only such an approach will provide the legitimacy that the WTO system so badly needs to deliver on the Doha Development Agenda.

In order to successfully respond to the multifaceted challenges we are facing in the world today, we are convinced that the international community should rededicate itself to the values of solidarity, tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation.

The belief that countries can be immune from what other countries do is no longer tenable. The need for international cooperation, rather than confrontation, is critical. A new international order is essential if we are to avoid a collision of cultures and religious beliefs.

This is the last occasion on which I will address the General Assembly in my capacity as Prime Minister. In six days' time, I will relinquish my current post and accede to the presidency, while my Deputy Prime Minister will be sworn in as Prime Minister. I am confident that he will be accorded the same collaboration and friendship that I have enjoyed during my tenure in office.

Before I conclude, however, I renew my appeal to the United Kingdom to take all measures to complete the process of the decolonization of Mauritius. For years, Mauritius has consistently reaffirmed its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, here and in all international forums. I sincerely regret that this issue has not been resolved. I therefore reiterate our appeal to the United Kingdom, as a country known for its fair play and for championing human rights, and to our friends in the United States, to engage in a serious dialogue with Mauritius over the issue of the Chagos Archipelago so that an early solution may be found.

The removal of the Chagossians under false pretences resulted in gross violations of human rights. Hopefully this aspect of the matter will be resolved through the British courts shortly.

(*spoke in French*)

I also appeal to the French Republic, with which we have excellent relations, to resume the dialogue with a view to returning Tromelin island to Mauritian sovereignty.

(*spoke in English*)

With those words, I bid the Assembly goodbye.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and to express gratitude to Mr. Jan Kavan for his work as the President during the fifty-seventh session.

This year has been hard for the United Nations. The events surrounding Iraq have revealed weak links in the system of international security. Not for the first time, the Security Council, owing to disagreements among its members, was unable to ensure the implementation of its resolutions and to react adequately to the situation.

Those disagreements continue to have a critical influence on the activity of the Security Council with regard to both Iraq and other crises and conflicts. It is clear that existing United Nations mechanisms do not meet the requirements of our time, and it is necessary

to reform the United Nations, including the Security Council, which reflects the reality of half a century ago.

Azerbaijan supports the well-known reform proposals of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in particular with regard to the expansion of the membership of the Security Council, and counts on the goodwill of the permanent members of the Council with regard to the revision of its mechanisms, in particular the right of veto.

We hope that the international community will now be able to consolidate its efforts to restore and strengthen a united and indivisible Iraq and to establish democracy based on the free will of all of the Iraqi people. Our country, which is ready to take part in this process, has begun to contribute to the strengthening of security and stability in Iraq.

The terrorist act against the United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad shocked the entire international community. The death of Sergio Vieira de Mello and his colleagues was a tragic loss for the Organization and all of us. What happened in Baghdad once again showed how vulnerable we are in the face of terror and convinced us that terrorists are capable of committing any crime. The only response should be an uncompromising commitment to fight against anyone who resorts to terrorism, no matter what goals are used as a cover. Selectivity and double standards have no place in this respect.

Our country, which has fallen victim to the aggression, occupation and terror unleashed by Armenia, has for years been fighting terrorism on its own. Our appeals to the international community to unite its efforts in combating terrorism went unheeded. The alarm went off only after 11 September 2001.

Success in the fight against terrorism cannot be achieved without eradicating the underlying roots and eliminating the factors that create a favourable environment for its dissemination. On the other hand, it is not possible to resolve conflicts throughout the world, including in the southern Caucasus, under conditions of continuing terrorism or of support for it at the State level.

We have to keep in mind that terrorist groups, created and developed by separatist and extremist forces, are usually based in illegally controlled territories, in the so-called grey zones that emerge as a result of acts of armed separatism and external aggression. One such uncontrolled grey zone is Nagorny Karabakh and other regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan, occupied by Armenian military forces.

While carrying out the comprehensive struggle against terror and resolving conflicts on the basis of principles and norms of international law, the international community should decisively resort to force. That is the only effective way of restoring justice and ensuring the rule of law.

The delegation of Azerbaijan has repeatedly drawn the attention of the international community from this high rostrum to the ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Ten years have elapsed since the Security Council adopted four resolutions demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian occupying forces from the Azerbaijani territories. However, Armenia continues to challenge the international community by ignoring those decisions, whereas the Security Council and the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) do not undertake any adequate measures in that regard.

Azerbaijan has on many occasions declared its commitment to the peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of norms and principles of international law. We are determined to continue with our efforts in this direction, and we count on the active participation of the international community. Azerbaijan will never accept a settlement on the basis of the so-called existing realities and will not cede a single inch of its land. Azerbaijan's patience is not limitless, and no one should try to take advantage of it. Responsibility for the deadlock in the settlement lies with the aggressor Armenia, and not with the victim of aggression, Azerbaijan. The passive position of an observer taken by the international community can only aggravate that deadlock.

Only after Armenia evacuates all the Azerbaijani territories and thus creates a basis for the peaceful settlement of the conflict can Armenia count on normal inter-State relations and cooperation with Azerbaijan. By rejecting our constructive proposals, based on the observance of international law, Armenia is demonstrating its genuine intention to seize and annex Azerbaijani territories.

Armenia's authorities continue to profess the ideology of aggressive nationalism, militarism,

separatism and terrorism and to doom their people to the deepest crisis. In a society where territorial expansion and the search for external enemies are instilled as a national idea, democracy and pluralism cannot take root. It should be realized in Armenia that the present situation of its conflict with Azerbaijan will not only fail to resolve but will also certainly aggravate its own serious internal social and economic problems.

It is with a sense of regret that one has to acknowledge that inaction by the international community leads to the strengthened self-confidence of Armenia in pursuing its destructive policy. Both the OSCE Minsk Group and the Security Council have backed off in the face of illegitimate force, thus calling into question the seriousness of their intentions and continuity of their actions.

Appeasement of the aggressor seriously undermines the whole system of international security, which is based on the inviolability of principles and norms of international law. That attitude has on many occasions taken a heavy toll on the international community.

We appeal to the Security Council to carry out the necessary measures in order to ensure the implementation of the above-mentioned four resolutions, and we expect that decisive steps will be taken to stop criminal and aggressive actions in the occupied territories and on the line of engagement, as well as to push the occupying forces to unconditionally, immediately and completely evacuate the seized Azerbaijani territories.

The conflict has deprived almost one million Azerbaijanis of roofs over their heads. It is clear that the forthcoming winter will again become another hard test for the refugees and the internally displaced persons, hundreds of thousand of whom continue to live in tent camps. The Government of Azerbaijan, using its limited resources, spares no effort to mitigate their suffering. Recently, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan by decree allocated more than $70 million to the construction of housing for refugees.

While we highly appreciate the assistance of the international community, we nevertheless are worried by its decreasing scale. We urge the relevant United Nations agencies and donor countries, as well as non-governmental organizations, to boost their attention to the problems of the forcefully displaced Azerbaijani population and to respond adequately to their needs. As for the long-term resolution of this problem, it lies, of course, in the settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and in the return of the refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

The conflict has also severely damaged the economy of Azerbaijan. However, having mobilized our domestic resources, we managed to overcome serious social-economic crises and to move towards stabilization and development. Economic reform policies and the oil strategy elaborated and being implemented under the leadership of the President of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Mr. Heydar Aliyev, have already yielded concrete results. These reforms have led to macroeconomic stability and high economic growth rates.

The promotion of the market economy and entrepreneurship increased the share of the private sector of the economy to 73 per cent. Figures on foreign direct investment per capita show that Azerbaijan is one of the leaders among the countries with economies in transition. On average, the annual economic growth rate is between 8 per cent and 10 per cent.

The implementation of large-scale transregional projects on development and transportation of hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea to the world market and the diversification of transport corridors, initiated by Azerbaijan, have opened new prospects for the social and economic development of countries along the East-West corridor, aimed at the restoration of the historic Silk Road.

This progress would be impossible without internal political stability, which has created the prerequisites and conditions for implementing radical political reforms and the development of democratic society. Today, Azerbaijani democracy stands at the edge of its next test of maturity and firmness. On October 15, the elections for President of the Republic will be held in Azerbaijan. The legislative basis for conducting genuinely free and fair elections has been established in the country. The recently adopted Election Code was widely discussed at the local and international levels, and it meets the highest international standards. Numerous international observers of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other international organizations, as well as local observers, will follow the presidential elections.

The triumph of democracy, social progress and sustainable development on a global scale are impossible unless the problems of poverty and sharp disproportion in economic performance across different countries and regions are resolved. In that regard, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals is extremely important. Combating poverty presupposes close interaction between developed and developing countries.

Regrettably, there is still no breakthrough in that regard. Developed States should pay more attention to the problems of the countries with economies in transition. Experience proves that narrow-minded interests frequently prevail, and thus deadlocks emerge in the negotiation process. Azerbaijan believes that enlargement of parties to the multilateral trade system, as well as granting the provisions of special and differential treatment in the World Trade Organization (WTO) to both developing countries and countries with economies in transition, will contribute to the successful global integration of the latter.

We are firmly convinced of the need to develop a dialogue among civilizations and cultures. Only through dialogue and good will shall we defeat mistrust and confrontation, and unify our forces in addressing common threats and challenges.

In conclusion, allow me once again to reiterate Azerbaijan's strong adherence to its political course, aimed at building a strong democratic State with a market economy, and our genuine willingness and desire to effectively contribute to peace and international security.

Mr. Quiñones Abarca (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Linnette Saborío, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by Her Excellency Ms. Linnette Saborío, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Ms. Saborío, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Linnette Saborío, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Saborío (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly. We are convinced that his well-known personal and professional qualities will allow him to lead our work to full success.

We particularly welcome the fact that a fraternal Caribbean country should hold so high a position. We trust that your election will shed light on the role of the smaller nations in this Organization and will allow us to consider the challenges that small economies face.

Today, once again, the international community is gathered at the United Nations to consider the most serious problems afflicting mankind and to design specific measures to resolve them. In so doing, we must recall the essential purpose of this session — attaining peace, justice and well-being for each and very individual on this planet. Indeed, the human right to peace informs, nourishes and justifies all other basic rights and constitutes the very essence of the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Basic individual freedoms, political, social and economic rights and commitments to sustainable development and disarmament all have a single purpose — securing peace, freedom and happiness for all. The first step towards peace therefore is full respect for human rights.

Fundamental human rights constitute a minimal framework of guarantees necessary to ensure the integral development of the human person and the construction of a harmonious society. For that reason, respect for human rights at all levels of society and for all peoples, without distinction, is indispensable.

Costa Rica advocates for the strengthening of the international mechanisms for the promotion and monitoring of human rights. We must overcome the politicization of verification machinery by creating

objective criteria for the implementation of human rights instruments in such a way that verification itself encourages policies that promote human rights and that consolidate their protection.

Similarly, it is necessary to achieve the universality of international treaties that promote respect for basic rights. In that context, we welcome the fact that, in conjunction with the current general debate, a special treaty event to promote the signature and the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is being held. That instrument constitutes an effective mechanism for preventing those very serious violations of human dignity.

We welcome the creation and the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague, thanks to the successful election of its Judges last February. Fortunately, mankind now possesses an effective, independent and impartial institution with the authority to prosecute the most serious crimes that infringe upon human dignity.

We also deem it urgent to consider the relationship between human rights and the environment. We welcome the fact that the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation recognized the importance of studying, in an exhaustive and transparent way, that relationship between human rights and the environment, including the fundamental right to development. We consider it indispensable that this item be added to the agenda of the General Assembly.

Full observance of human rights is being threatened by some recent developments in the area of biotechnology. Unquestionably, progress in the areas of medical science and genetic research facilitate the development and the discovery of new therapies and medical techniques. However, those same technologies pose new ethical challenges, because they can be used to violate human rights and assault the intrinsic dignity of the human person.

The use of human embryos in scientific experiments, discarding them in the process, is unacceptable. Cloning reduces the individual to a mere object of industrial production and manipulation. That is objectionable both morally and legally. Costa Rica supports the prohibition of all forms of human cloning and has proposed a draft resolution to this end, which today has dozens of countries sponsoring it.

The second step in the path to peace is to make democracy a form of life. True democracy is a permanent process that demands daily efforts of coordination and cooperation in order to respect the will of the majority and the rights of the minorities. True democracy also entails equal opportunities in the areas of social and economic development.

A third step to peace is disarmament, demilitarization and the reduction of military expenditures. The reduction of military arsenals decreases opportunities for violence and makes it possible to devote greater resources to social development programmes. In that context, we welcome the progress made by the Central American nations regarding the reduction of their armed forces and military arsenals. Two States from the region have already abolished their armies — Panama in 1990 and Costa Rica since 1948. We support the proposal of President Bolaños of Nicaragua, on the reasonable balance of forces in the Central American region, which will generate greater transparency and confidence.

My Government supports the adoption of a complete ban on arms transfers to all terrorist groups, as well as to those groups and Governments that commit gross or systematic violations of human rights or international humanitarian law. The prompt adoption of a legally binding convention to regulate the arms trade is urgent.

We urge those States that possess nuclear weapons to truly commit themselves to the nuclear disarmament negotiations. We call upon all States to renounce the development of new nuclear weapons and to ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We welcome the fact that the member States of the Organization of American States have recently adopted a Costa Rican initiative on the non-proliferation of chemical weapons in the Western Hemisphere.

The pursuit of peace requires the peaceful resolution of conflicts through the mechanisms established pursuant to international law. The International Court of Justice occupies a central

position as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations that ensures the rule of law in international relations. We urge all States to accept its obligatory jurisdiction without conditions.

In order to make further progress towards peace we must strengthen United Nations mechanisms designed to prevent armed conflict and humanitarian crises from occurring and to re-establish the peace once such conflicts have broken out. The Security Council must carry out its duties in a more effective, active and fair way; no national interest should prevent it from taking action. In this context, we must revitalize the Security Council reform process, which, after 10 years of work, still lacks results.

In order to attain peace and prevent civil wars, we must devote sufficient financial, technical and human resources to the peacekeeping operations carried out under the auspices of this Organization. Such missions should enjoy the resolute support and effective participation of all nations, as was reaffirmed in the Rio Group statement on the situation in Colombia, adopted on 24 May in Cuzco. We urgently appeal for this Organization to support the peace process in Colombia and to urge the guerrilla movements to sign an agreement to cease hostilities and enter into an open-ended and transparent dialogue with a view to reaching a peaceful and definitive resolution of the Colombian conflict.

The United Nations must decisively address the deep-rooted causes of armed conflict. It is necessary to eliminate the sources of tension and violence. It is essential to eradicate the economic, social and political injustices that fuel conflict.

The change of regime in Iraq, which we welcome, has given the United Nations and the international community at large a unique opportunity to fully integrate that nation into the international system. We must not miss this opportunity. We therefore call upon the occupying Powers, the rest of the international community and the United Nations to work for the reconstruction and normalization of that nation.

Furthermore, we must not allow Iraq to become a source of regional instability or a breeding ground for international terrorism. We must bear in mind the sacrifice made by Sergio Vieira de Mello and all the other United Nations personnel who gave their lives in Baghdad for this Organization and for the people of Iraq. Their sacrifice must guide us in our work. Their martyrdom must lead us to devote every effort to the protection of the fundamental right to peace.

Today, peace is threatened by the resurgence of international terrorism. All necessary measures must therefore be taken, in conformity with the rule of law, to prevent acts of terrorism and punish those who commit them. The fight against international terrorism, however, should not become an excuse to violate human rights or to adopt repressive measures against an innocent population.

In 1971, the General Assembly approved the entry of the People's Republic of China into the United Nations. That decision was correct, inasmuch as it promoted the universal character of this global Organization. In accordance with that same principle, my country has since that time been advocating that the Republic of China on Taiwan also be represented in this Organization.

We believe that the Republic of China on Taiwan could greatly contribute to the work of this Organization. For many years that nation was an active Member of the United Nations. It participated constructively in all of its activities and the work of its bodies. Since then, the Republic of China on Taiwan has been developing close and productive relations with peoples and Governments throughout the world, promoting programmes and projects for the sustainable development of communities. In keeping with the principle of universality that the United Nations itself promotes, Costa Rica advocates that both Governments be represented at this Organization.

I have set out a series of steps that are indispensable if peace is to be fully enjoyed. Such steps are the very least we need to take in order to fulfil our commitment to peace — and that commitment must be absolute.

May God bless us all as we work for the well-being of humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Linnette Saborío, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Per Stig Moeller, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Mr. Moeller (Denmark): I should like at the outset to express, on behalf of Denmark, the most sincere condolences to the United Nations and to the families of Sergio Vieira de Mello and of all those who so tragically lost their lives in Baghdad five weeks ago. I also wish to pay tribute to Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh. She was taken from us by an evil act that is beyond comprehension, while carrying out her important work. We will all miss Anna; she should be here today.

We need the United Nations today more than ever. We need the United Nations to provide a more secure world, to fight international terrorism, to resolve conflicts and to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We need the United Nations in ensuring fundamental human rights for all people. We need the United Nations to establish, implement and develop an international legal order based on the rule of law. And we need the United Nations in combating poverty and securing sustainable economic growth.

Iraq has been a key challenge for the Security Council. A united Council provided the United Nations with a mandate to assist the people of Iraq in a wide range of areas, including facilitating and supporting the political process. Iraq, the United Nations and the international community as a whole suffered a tragic loss in the recent attacks. But it should not make us waver in our determination to continue working for a better future for Iraq. Those evil attacks must not inspire other terrorists to threaten the United Nations presence in Iraq. Sovereignty should be transferred to the Iraqis as quickly as possible, but the international military presence must be maintained until security is fully restored. The United Nations role and presence in this process must be strengthened.

Immense challenges lie ahead of us. Our goal is to ensure that the twenty-first century becomes the century in which each and every one of us can live in peace, stability and growing prosperity — a century in which freedom, respect for the individual, human rights and democracy become daily realities, not just abstract ideas, for billions of people.

Considered over time, the United Nations has a strong scorecard. We have managed to transform the paralysed cold war Organization into a key forum for international discussions and decisions in all fields. Let me highlight three areas where the United Nations could be even stronger.

First, the United Nations is at the forefront of the fight against poverty. By agreeing to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, we have set ourselves measurable targets by which we must all stand and be counted. In Monterrey and Johannesburg the developing countries acknowledged responsibility for their own development, based on good governance, democracy and the rule of law. The African efforts must be especially highlighted and supported. Every individual on the African continent must feel the urgency of our collective efforts to improve his or her living conditions. Only then can the tide be turned on a continent that has been lagging behind for too long.

Denmark's commitment to development speaks for itself, be it in terms of development assistance or in relation to trade liberalization. Especially for the benefit of the developing countries, we need such trade liberalization. Therefore, the lack of results in Cancún was a great disappointment. We needed results, both for the developing world and for the global economy. We did not achieve those results in Cancún, but Denmark will certainly work hard to achieve them in the future — not least for the developing world.

Denmark supports a high-level event in 2005 focusing on the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration in order to give new energy to the implementation of all the Millennium Development Goals. Denmark stands ready to provide a full account of its efforts to achieve the Goals, including in the fields of trade and development assistance.

Secondly, the United Nations is essential for the establishment, the implementation and the development of an international legal order based on the rule of law. The United Nations was created with a strong purpose and a great vision. The concepts and values of the Charter — of international peace and stability based on equality among nations and respect for their sovereignty — are universal.

The strength of our values and of our principles must be measured by our ability to apply them to the realities around us. We must be ready to adapt our collective actions to the needs of the world. Attesting to that is the immense work done in the fields of human rights; the rights of women and children, including the right to reproductive health care and services; the

struggle against terrorism; and the efforts to control nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Furthermore, the establishment of the International Criminal Court is the single most important step in the modern history of international criminal law. It sends a strong signal that the international community will no longer allow the most serious international crimes to remain unpunished.

Denmark firmly believes that a democratic society based on the rule of law is the best guarantee for stable development, in terms of both upholding fundamental freedoms and furthering social justice. Human rights are universal and must be applied by all States. It is imperative that all States be committed to cooperating constructively with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and that they overcome traditional attitudes concerning State sovereignty.

Thirdly, the United Nations is at the core of efforts to tackle old and new security challenges. The Security Council has successfully taken on international terrorism, and it should continue to focus on how to deal with weapons of mass destruction. Another pressing issue is how to prevent the breakdown of societies and to address the root causes of conflicts; and, if prevention is unsuccessful, how to deal with the breakdown of social order. A strategic vision on how to deal with the new challenges is urgently needed.

The Security Council still reflects the power structures that existed at the end of the Second World War. Consequently, a comprehensive reform is needed to make the Council more representative and, at the same time, to safeguard the efficiency of the decision-making process. It is of equal importance that the Security Council ensure compliance with its resolutions.

The process towards more targeted and "smart" sanctions should be continued. We must ensure that sanction regimes clearly monitor whether the objects targeted are in compliance with the aims pursued by the sanctions. Assistance to Member States in implementing sanctions should also be considered. Accompanying resolutions with incentives or carrot-and-stick measures could be another option.

We would also welcome a strengthening of the division of labour and cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. Over the past 50 years, we have been building strong regional institutions to overcome our divisions and to manage our problems. With the initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the rapid intervention of the Economic Community of West African States in Liberia, recent developments in Africa are very encouraging in that regard as well. To further promote those developments, we must all continue and expand our political and financial support for the strong and progressive African leadership.

Over the years, Denmark has been active in world affairs and has been a strong supporter of the United Nations. We shall continue to focus on areas where we can contribute to make the world a better place in which to live for all. Denmark is therefore seeking to become a member of the Security Council in 2005 and 2006. If we become a member of the Council, we shall work to further develop the Council's efficiency and its impact. We shall work for increased synergy among the military, political, humanitarian and developmental aspects of conflict management. We hope we can make a special contribution to solving the various conflicts that are still not settled around the world, and we shall do our utmost to prevent new conflicts from arising. Our aim will be to continue to build bridges between the multiple interests of the Members of the United Nations.

Underpinning our vision of a strong United Nations for the twenty-first century is the need to strengthen and reform the Organization at all levels and in all its aspects. We express strong support for the Secretary-General and for his persistent efforts in that regard, and we hope that the Secretary-General's high-level panel will provide new inspiration and fresh ideas for us all. But we, the Member States, must take the lead; the ball is in our court. We must enable the United Nations to take credible, efficient action to meet the challenges of this century and of this millennium; that is our collective responsibility and duty.

As a member of the European Union, Denmark is working actively towards these goals, and I can assure the Assembly that all the Nordic countries strongly support the Secretary-General's proposals and are ready to face these challenges. Let us together ensure that the United Nations is ready, too.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean Obeid, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Obeid (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): This great number of heads of State and Government have assembled at the current session neither to perform ceremonial rituals nor to conduct the periodic consideration of agendas. Rather, it is the state of the world today that necessitated this exceptional gathering, because people everywhere sense a growing struggle between fear and hope, security and instability, force and weakness, surplus and need, and freedom and oppression.

Returning to this Assembly is tantamount to returning to our origins and sources, and to common sense and principles, after nearly losing them. We return to this mother Organization like children who return home changed. Some are obedient and others are rebellious; some are just and others are unjust. However, we find the mother Organization as badly hurt as some of its children.

What hurts the United Nations hurts us all. Its fallen victims are indeed martyrs of humanity in its entirety, like Count Folke Bernadotte, Dag Hammarskjöld, Sergio Vieira de Mello and others who have made the ultimate sacrifice for this Organization.

The peoples of the world perceive the United Nations as a haven for the rights of the weak and the needy. It also exercises its authority to dissuade the strong who act aggressively and forget their obligations and commitments.

In our region and in our country, we have greatly suffered from double standards and recourse to might at the expense of right. Since the foundation of an entity on the ruins of the people of Palestine, an entity that recognizes neither its own borders nor those of others, repeated injustices and wars have arisen as a result of violations of the spirit and raison d'être of this international Organization.

Comprehensive and just approaches were adopted at the international Conference in Madrid to find a peaceful resolution to the Middle East conflict, resulting in principles and accomplishments that cannot be renounced or reversed. Incomplete approaches emerged, but they failed to achieve peace, maintain security and ensure stability. It has become clear to everyone, except to those in Israel who are arrogant and intransigent, that there can be no security without a political solution, and no partial, peaceful, political solution without the comprehensive peace that embodies the spirit of justice of the Madrid Conference and the integrated Arab peace initiative of the Arab Summit in Beirut.

Such a solution is based on the relevant international resolutions calling for the return to Lebanon of the rest of the territory still under Israeli occupation, including Shebaa farms; for the return to Syria of its territory up to its 4 June 1967 borders; and for enabling Palestinian refugees to exercise their legal, humanitarian and moral right of return to their homeland. Such a process should ensure the establishment of a sovereign, independent, stable and viable Palestinian State, with al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

Developments on the ground, however, dash that hope. The Government of Israel continues to build settlements, impose extrajudicial sentences, kill men, women and children, demolish houses and carry out pre-emptive arrests and assassinations.

Similarly, Lebanon suffers from persistent and extremely provocative and aggravated Israeli threats, attacks and violations by sea, land and air, as described by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative in the region. The international community should therefore pressure Israel to end those excesses.

Lebanese detainees and prisoners are still illegally held hostage, without due process, in Israel, which still keeps the remaining maps of the landmines that it planted during its occupation of southern Lebanon. Furthermore, Israel continues its policy of assassination and still covets Lebanon's waters and natural resources.

I must say that the failure to guarantee the right of Palestinian refugees to exercise their right of return puts the entire Middle East in an explosive situation. The Government and people of Lebanon are especially committed to the implementation of this right, which we consider to be legal, natural and moral. Therefore, the so-called realistic solutions to this problem should not even be raised, since they run counter to the principles of international law and the spirit of justice. Indeed, only a commitment to the right of return and refusal to resettle the refugees in Lebanon are at the core of Lebanon's reconciliation that ended the war in Lebanon and that led to the Taif Agreement, which was endorsed by the United Nations.

In this context, I wish to stress that Lebanon's policy choices and positions regarding the Middle East conflict are constant and unaffected by the balance of power. We believe that those choices are righteous, moral and consistent with the requirements of a just peace. Those choices alone are capable of bringing about a possible and strong settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Such an undertaking is compatible with the goals of the United Nations, as it strives to strengthen its role, with the support of the sponsors of the peace process and the participation of the European Union.

It is in Israel's interest to revert to or to be brought back to the language of reason and justice. Since Israel's Governments have failed to do so, responsibility for bringing Israel back to reason falls to the international community.

For in Israel there is a Government that considers only its rights and fails to take account of its obligations. We believe that those who consider only one side are the most dangerous kinds of people.

Under the pretext of security, the Government in Israel is continuing to build a wall that separates Israel from the people of Palestine and is attempting to build a higher, larger and more menacing wall between the greater nations of the West and the rest of the world, especially the Arab and the Muslim world. Israel does that in a bid to serve and support those who wish to fuel conflict between East and West, between Christianity and Islam and among religions, cultures and civilizations, when, in the final analysis, there is only one human civilization, which stems from common spiritual values based on the belief in one eternal God and his messengers.

Furthermore, the Government of Israel resorts daily to the stick as a means of subjugation. It ignores, or pretends to ignore, that the use of the stick incites disobedience; that, with time, the oppressors and the oppressed often exchange roles and positions; and that many who were once at the helm at various stages of their lives have faded from historical memory, having forgotten that only God is everlasting, as are the universal principles of equality, fairness and justice.

There are those in the Israeli Government who were brought to power by the very extremism that caused the ouster of their predecessors or even led to their assassination, and who nevertheless do not hesitate to label Arabs and Muslims as the extremists or accuse them of being the sole source of extremism.

In Israel, there are those who insist on making Israel a fortress towering over the region, rather than a State within it. There are those who make life for the Palestinians worse than death, and who are determined to force fellow Israelis to die with the Arabs in war, rather than live with them in peace.

There are those in the Government of Israel who try to deny that Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian's right of return are a mandatory path for any political settlement and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace is to be achieved. On the contrary, they desperately use the feeble-minded to fan the flames of conflict among the Palestinians themselves, among the Lebanese, between the Lebanese and the Syrians, and among the Arabs, instead of extinguishing the flames of conflict between the Arabs and Israelis in a decent, just and comprehensive manner.

The Government of Israel believes that it is more important to gain time than to gain peace, that it is better to manipulate the various tracks and problems than to seek to resolve the conflict in all its dimensions and problems and that intimidation can transform injustice into right, right into injustice and occupation into independence.

In Israel, the Government clings to its slogan of absolute sovereignty, and to the sovereignty it violates or violates with others, limiting the role of its most important ally to providing money and weapons, denying it even the right to advise. If the world's only super-Power utters a word of advice about the construction of the wall of separation and discrimination, it is ignored and construction of the wall continues.

Offence is often the result of excessive tolerance of fault, and excessive chaos in standards and yardsticks is caused by the discriminatory use of standards regarding justice and international resolutions. It is not just, wise, safe or peaceful for powerful States to continue to tolerate double and multiple standards when dealing with Israel, while applying firm standards and measures when dealing with the weak and the oppressed and other nations of the world.

This clearly leads us to call for the reform of the United Nations, as well as for strengthening its role, by

reviewing the working methods of the Security Council, expanding its membership, giving it more weight in decision-making and respecting the democratic consultative nature that must be the basis of our international Organization. That reform should fairly and effectively address new challenges of world security and safety. It should also provide balance and stability in international relations, particularly if that is accompanied by modernizing the work of the United Nations organs and rationalization to avoid use of the right of veto in a way that contravenes law and justice in the world.

In Iraq, there is also a growing call for the United Nations to play a pivotal role in assisting the people of Iraq to maintain their unity, control their own destiny, end the occupation of their territories, establish the means to administer their wealth, choose the provisions of their constitution and freely elect their representatives.

War can be waged from the air by one side only. However, peace on the ground must be made with others inside and outside of Iraq and with the United Nations. Peace in Iraq and Iraq's destiny require that the Iraqis be freed of occupation as soon as possible and that they work, under the auspices of the United Nations, in an expanded, pivotal and political role that is not restricted to social matters alone.

That is the fundamental appeal of the events and tragedies and of the people of Iraq. Only the ignorant or those pretending ignorance refuse to listen and to draw lessons and conclusions before it is too late.

The beginning of this century has been marked by violence and terrorism, whose worst manifestation has been the tragedies and crimes of 11 September and the subsequent calls for extremism and clash of civilizations, which prompt us to refuse to yield to the worst evils that threaten the peace and unity of our planet.

Lebanon was among the first countries to be targeted by terrorism, which was carried out by fundamentalist groups. It fought it with courage and resolve. At the same time, Lebanon still faces State terrorism practiced by Israel, which has caused the death, injury and displacement of thousands of Lebanese and the destruction of essential facilities and infrastructure. While we differentiate between terrorism and the right of peoples whose territories are occupied to resist and to liberate that land, within the context of international resolutions and the Charter, our country explicitly and strongly condemns all forms of terrorism, as it constitutes a threat to mankind as a whole, regardless of race, colour or religion. Lebanon reaffirms its commitment to continue to cooperate with the international community to fight this extremely harmful and damaging scourge.

In conclusion, I would be remiss if I did not congratulate Mr. Hunte on his election as President of the General Assembly and wish him success in his stewardship. I also would like to commend the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to promote all opportunities for peace, stability and development in the world. Furthermore, I would like to pay a tribute to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for its role in southern Lebanon. Now that Lebanon has been able to liberate most of its territory, it is my hope that UNIFIL will fulfil the remainder of the mandate entrusted to it, as defined in Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Lebanon has and always will be a country that rejects isolation and rigidity and that will remain open to dialogue and creative, rich, civilized human interaction. Our country will always remain true to its message. Despite the challenges, we remain eager to effectively promote justice and the rule of law and uphold the values of freedom and democracy.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Mr. Mircea Geoana, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania.

Mr. Geoana (Romania) (*spoke in French*): I wish to add Romania's voice to the heartfelt congratulations of others to His Excellency Mr. Julian Robert Hunte on his election to the important position of President of the General Assembly, wish him every success and assure him of our delegation's full support.

The political debate of this session of the Assembly is being held in an international setting that requires us to take a long, hard look at the way the United Nations can respond to the challenges facing us.

The recent terrorist attacks in Baghdad, which took the lives of Ambassador Sergio Vieira de Mello and other brave members of the United Nations community, as well as of Iraqis who had committed themselves to restoring stability in their country, proved once more that the only language that fanatics use is that of crime and terror. The best way to pay

tribute to the memory of those victims of terror is to carry out, with redoubled determination, the mission to which they had dedicated their life.

Today, the United Nations is called upon to continue to play a greater role in the service of good.

Over the course of the past decade, the Organization has accomplished a great deal, despite the seemingly insurmountable difficulties and certain evident limitations. Those obstacles sometimes grew out of a lack of shared perspectives regarding the problems confronting us today. Yet, we have managed to keep world security under control.

(*spoke in English*)

As always at the United Nations, we are faced with a challenge brought about by differing views towards common problems. There is nothing new here, except for the magnitude of the consequences. We cannot afford to do nothing simply because we do not agree on everything. The United Nations is not about agreeing on everything. It is about building consensus. We can do just that if we concentrate on negotiation — not language, but substance.

Irrespective of how important the debate might be, we should not be distracted today by talk of a unipolar, multipolar or even bipolar world. Rather, we should concentrate on how we can govern our world in a way that benefits the individual, brings about opportunity and pre-empts, deters and fights terrorism and aggression. If we are true to the principle of an international community dedicated to preserving peace and increasing prosperity, we should discuss how to achieve higher levels of international understanding, rather than the relevance of the United Nations system today, for we have to remember that true security is shared security, and true prosperity is shared prosperity.

To achieve this, we should also keep in mind that legitimacy brings credibility that leads to predictability and predictability, brings long-term commonality of views that is the cornerstone of lasting coalitions.

This is why we share the assessment of the Secretary-General, that "The United Nations is not an end in itself. Rather it is an instrument for achieving common ends." (A/58/1, para. 10)

Our belief that we, the Member States, must keep the United Nations working with efficiency, with purpose and with result prompted Romania to put forward our candidature for membership in the Security Council starting next January. We thank the Eastern European Group and others for their support for us. This is a responsibility that we do not underestimate. Our mission will be to uphold the validity of the United Nations as an essential international actor in preventing and resolving conflicts, eliminating poverty and promoting human rights.

As befits a State that will soon be a member of both the European Union and NATO, we believe in the multilateral approach to tackling terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime and violations of human rights.

As a country that has struggled to rebuild a democratic society based on the rule of law, a market economy and respect for human rights, we understand the complex challenges of transition that other countries are also facing. It is not an easy process, but in our view it is the only way to guarantee durable economic prosperity and social cohesion for the citizen. We want to see a strengthening of the central role of the United Nations in coordinating worldwide efforts to this end.

Romania's international profile is defined by our location and our history and capability in Europe and by our transition experience. We are determined to play a responsible role in connecting the West and East of our continent, and in reaching out to countries on the Eastern shore of the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the greater Middle East. We pledge to contribute to spreading Euro-Atlantic values beyond NATO and the European Union areas by consistently promoting the culture of dialogue and regional cooperation.

Terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the rising number of failing States and global disparities are some of the most worrying hallmarks of our times. The speed and unevenness of global processes intensify the complexity and pervasive nature of these threats to our common security and prosperity.

We already possess an important range of tools to tackle threats like terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. They should now be used in a more responsible and effective manner. For example, the Counter-Terrorism Committee should be given more professional resources so it can act more effectively to

streamline national legislation on uprooting the financial resources of terrorism and monitor its implementation. International non-proliferation legal regimes should be strengthened in order to prevent determined proliferators from breaching their international obligations. Countries of concern with regard to proliferation could be subjected to diplomatic and economic pressure, which is most effective when applied multilaterally.

Challenges to the security and stability of our world also emerge as globalization processes expand. Sustainable development is increasingly related to sustainable peace and security. Globalization is inevitable. Provided that it is combined with good governance, proper development assistance and awareness of environmental issues, as well as with fair trade through open markets, globalization is a force for progress. But global disparities are not disappearing. The ratio of per capita incomes of the richest and poorest countries now stands at more than seventy to one. So it is especially disappointing that the World Trade Organization talks in Cancún ended in deadlock. We call on all parties to redouble their efforts in December to resume dialogue and close the gap. The success we need is not just that of freer and more open markets, but also that of equitable trade, creating added value to regions, nations and communities.

Sustainable development demands first that we manage globalization responsibly so that it benefits all. It is time to focus on implementing the concrete goals of eradicating poverty and accelerating development. The challenge will be to prioritize our work. Our focus at the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development at the end of next month should remain squarely on achieving results.

We also must redouble our efforts to put an end to conflicts, and we must find a way to rebuild those countries that have survived conflict but are struggling to survive peace. Africa is a particularly worrying example of how dangerous it can be to ignore the consequences of conflicts. The grave humanitarian crises on that continent are foreboding a bleak future for many countries and fomenting despair and far-reaching frustrations.

The international community has to be more engaged in addressing poverty, intolerance and ethnic hatred. We would like to see the United Nations enhance its peace operation capabilities and emphasize in particular the reconstruction and rehabilitation processes. We have done this in Afghanistan, yet it remains a test of our ability and willingness to secure a successful democracy offensive in the fight against terrorism. I think we have enough at stake to stand by that commitment.

In the Middle East, the new wave of violence is preventing the full implementation of the agreed road map. Romania strongly condemns suicide bombings that are carried out by the enemies of peace and security in the area. We urge the new Palestinian Government to act effectively against further terrorist attacks targeting Israel and its citizens, but it is equally important that the Israeli Government stand by its commitments in the framework of pursuing a political solution to this bitter conflict. We fully support the actions of the Quartet that are meant to contribute to overcoming this dangerous situation. We shall follow with utmost interest the ministerial meeting that is scheduled for this week.

In Iraq, we believe it is time for the international community to work together to stabilize and reconstruct that tragic country, whose people have suffered so much under tyranny for so long. The successful conclusion of negotiations on the new resolution concerning Iraq is not a mere option — it is a must.

We need now to concentrate on what matters most: the steps that must be taken next by the international community to empower the Iraqi people and to ensure the democratic functioning of institutions in that country and stability, not only in Iraq, but also in the greater Middle East as a whole. As a participating country in the Coalition Provisional Authority, Romania is already engaged and ready to continue to contribute to achieving these goals. We are looking forward to participating in the coming ministerial conference on assistance for the Iraqi people in Madrid this October.

Many conflicts in the world stem from the breakdown of nation-States. Porous borders, weak national institutions and the development of alternative allegiances based on religious, economic and other factors often lead to the collapse of State structures. The principal feature of such States is the absence of political legitimacy, coupled with an uncontrolled or unaccountable security sector and contempt for the rule of law. That leads to violent conflict over control of

resources or between different ethnic groups and to violation of human rights and humanitarian law. Illegal arms become readily accessible, organized crime and violence flourish and economic prospects die.

A good example of where the international community has been successful in preventing the relapse of a post-conflict situation is South-East Europe. The past year has seen real progress in this region, due principally to the increased efforts of the countries themselves, in partnership with the regional community and with support from international organizations and partners. But certain problems persist. It is vital to press ahead with full commitment to meeting the responsibilities and timelines that have already been accepted and to creating truly democratic and multi-ethnic societies. Combating organized crime and illegal trafficking, including the most degrading kind that turns human beings into commodities, is a priority in our regional approach.

We need to look at all these challenges with a new determination to tackle them, making full and effective use of the tools available to us within the United Nations system. There has been much discussion of the ability of the United Nations to respond to crises. The disadvantages of the present working methods of its structures and mechanisms, which were conceived more than half a century ago, call for radical reform. The real debate is about effectiveness, adaptation and evolution. It is about our common will, as responsible members of the international community, to act together. Everything else — especially the badly needed strategies — will simply follow, and this will make it possible to approach the new and old threats alike.

The United Nations must increasingly serve as a catalyst for collective action. This requires close cooperation among its Member States, dialogue and partnership with the vibrant constellation of new non-State actors: civil society, non-governmental organizations, the business community and academia. Finally, the Organization must become more effective, efficient and accessible to the world's people.

We must weigh up our differences, gauge our ability for joint intervention and act in coordination. Just as the nature of current problems affects people in everything they do, so too must we put people at the centre of everything we do.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

A number of representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Choe Myong Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation would like to exercise the right of reply to the allegations made by the Japanese Foreign Minister, who yesterday referred to such issues as missiles, nuclear developments and abductions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

My delegation categorically rejects these unsubstantiated allegations and accordingly wishes to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the following truth about the abduction issue.

First, the issue of abduction is the product of the unprecedented hostile policy pursued by Japan against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the relations of intense hostility between the two countries that have persisted for more than a century. During its military occupation of Korea of more than 40 years, Japan inflicted unspeakable suffering, misfortune, disaster and sacrifice upon the Korean people. For example, Japan forcibly drafted and abducted more than 8.4 million Koreans, killed 1 million and forced 200,000 Korean girls and women to serve as comfort women for the Japanese military. This is only the tip of the iceberg of all the atrocities and crimes against humanity committed by Japan against the Korean people. No single family in my country was safe from the Japanese atrocities.

Under these circumstances, how can one dare to compare the death of only a few abducted Japanese to these myriad human casualties, amounting to genocide? Notwithstanding this, Japan still refuses to disclose the truth of its crimes and instead resorts to every possible means of avoiding paying compensation to the victims. Consequently, anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea hostility still persists today. Against

such a backdrop, things like the abduction issue have arisen.

Secondly, the issue in question should naturally be settled between the two countries. In accordance with the historic Pyongyang Declaration, published on 17 September 2002, and other bilateral agreements, both countries committed themselves to resolving such pending issues as this. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea Government has done everything in its power to bring about an early solution to the abduction issue. It has, among other things, provided all conveniences and necessary information to the visiting Japanese delegation investigating the issue on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's soil. As a result of our sincere cooperation, the issue has essentially been resolved. The only thing left now is to ensure the safe return of the five survivors back to Pyongyang.

Surprisingly enough, however, Japan betrayed the Pyongyang Declaration and reversed all its promises. In the first instance, Japan has unilaterally abrogated its obligations under the bilateral agreement by detaining five survivors of the abduction, who entered Japan for a period of 10 to 15 days on a home visit. They were supposed to come back home to Pyongyang. This is the response of the Japan authorities to the sincere and generous attitude of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Thirdly, the issue in question is a humanitarian as well as human rights issue that should in no way be abused for political purposes. Japan is only interested in politicizing this issue with a view to defaming the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Japan is bringing this issue to international forums of any kind, even to the forum that is devoted to economic assistance. If Japan is genuinely interested in resolving the pending issues, such as the abduction, it must address its past crimes completely by disclosing all facts of atrocities and duly compensating the victims.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): In response to the statement just made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I should like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Japanese Government to exercise the right of reply.

The Japanese Government does not think that the abduction issue has been resolved at all. It is all the more important to correct this abnormal situation as soon as possible, given that five abductees who came back to Japan last October after an absence of 25 years are still separated from the families they left behind in Pyongyang. The return of the families must be realized. It is also necessary for the abduction issue to be thoroughly resolved through all available measures, including fact-finding as to what actually happened.

There is no change in Japan's basic position that we should comprehensively resolve the abduction issue as well as the security issues, including the nuclear and the missile problems, based on the Japan-Democratic People's Republic of Korea Pyongyang Declaration, thereby aiming at the normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea. The Japanese Government would like to reiterate its strong request that North Korea take positive and responsible measures towards resolving these issues.

With regard to other points raised by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in the light of the late hour I would like to reserve our right to exercise the right of reply some time at a later stage during this session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): In his statement in the general debate this morning, the Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia made a reference to my country that deserves a brief comment.

Chile is working with Bolivia on a future-oriented bilateral agenda. Certainly, we are not anchored to the past. However, that bilateral process is based on unreserved respect for valid, longstanding international treaties that set out obligations for both parties in a framework giving primacy to international law and established rules and aimed at cooperation and effective integration.

Mr. Choe Myong Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation once again categorically rejects the allegations just made by the representative of Japan. I therefore feel there is no need to reiterate each of our positions, which have already been made known on several occasions.

However, I believe it is important to underline the fact that if Japan is truly interested in resolving the abduction issue, it should remain faithful to the joint declaration of Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to all bilateral agreements, which constitute a landmark in normalizing relations between the two countries.

In that context, we would like to ask Japan whether it is willing actually to resume implementation of the joint declaration, which we believe Japan has already betrayed, and to liquidate all its past crimes and atrocities against the Korean people, including, as I said, the forceful drafting and abducting of 8.4 million Koreans, the killing of 1 million and the imposing of sexual slavery to the Japanese military on 200,000 Korean girls and women. We are asking the Japanese representative this question because it is very much key to resolving of all pending issues, including the normalization of relations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan.

Secondly, we are asking Japan whether it is willing to be faithful to all bilateral agreements by releasing five abduction survivors whom Japan has detained during their stay in Japan for a home visit. Those survivors, who were supposed to come back to Pyongyang to decide on their future in consultation with their family members, have unfortunately been detained by Japan. They have now been described in the world mass media as "the re-abducted".

We are asking these questions; whether Japan will remain faithful to all bilateral agreements, including by releasing the five survivors that Japan has detained. Any failure on the part of Japan to provide an accurate, genuine and adequate answer to those simple and essential questions may automatically lead us all to believe that Japan is not interested in resolving the issue but only in politicizing it. That should be vehemently rejected and opposed by this body of the international community.

Mr. Aranibar Quiroga (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): With respect to the exercise of the right of reply by the representative of Chile, I must reaffirm that Bolivia does not and will not renounce its just claim to sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean, because our nation was born as an independent republic with a maritime coast. This claim, more than a century old, is the product not of stubbornness or caprice but rather of the insufficiency of our economic resources and the enormous geographic obstacles that hinder our competitiveness. Being landlocked has slowed our country's development and affected the welfare of our citizens, as has been noted in assessments of the challenges faced by all land-locked countries. It is ever more clearly demonstrated in studies, including those of the United Nations system, that the lack of sovereign maritime access is a factor of substantial negative impact on the potential for economic growth of land-locked countries. That is one more powerful reason for achieving the restoration of Bolivia's sovereign access to the sea. That is justice and is for us irrevocable. That is why we ask the international community for its solidarity and support.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation will not enter into a sterile debate with the delegation of Bolivia. International law is clear and conclusive on this issue, as is our determination to pursue cooperation and bilateral integration. Recent progress on the economic integration of our two countries speaks far more eloquently on this issue than anything I could say.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): The position of the Japanese Government with regard to the abduction case is what I set out in my first intervention.

Mr. Aranibar Quiroga (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We all agree that truth, rights and legitimacy always prevail in the end despite all efforts to resist their full development. We therefore agree with the international community and all those who wish to have a constructive attitude in these difficult times. We reaffirm on this occasion the need to advance constructively on the need to recognize Bolivia's sovereign right to maritime access.

The meeting rose at 7.30 p.m.